Conversations with Buñuel

Interviews with the Filmmaker, Family Members, Friends and Collaborators

MAX AUB

Translated and edited by Julie Jones

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Frontispiece: Luis Buñuel with Catherine Deneuve on the set of *Belle de Jour*, 1965 (courtesy of Paris Film Production, Five Films; ScreenProd/Photononstop/Alamy).

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Front cover photograph of Luis Buñuel by Carlos Saura

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Translator's Acknowledgments

I want first of all to thank Teresa Álvarez Aub and Elena Aub Barjau for allowing me to publish this translation and general edition of Max Aub's work, and Teresa's father, Federico Álvarez Arregui, editor (and he alone knows how much work that entailed) of the original publication, who encouraged me in this endeavor and provided as many answers as he could to my repeated questions. In spite of her busy schedule, Carmen Peire, editor of *Buñuel, novela* and author in her own right, was kind enough to put me in touch with the Aub family. I also particularly want to thank María José Calpe of the Fundación Max Aub. María José received me very generously at the Fundación in Segorbe in 2014. Since that visit, both she and Francisco Tortajada have helped me with innumerable requests.

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Translator's Introduction

When he had corrected the first galley proofs of *Cien años de soledad* (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*), Gabriel García Márquez took them with him to a party given by his close friends Luis and Janet Alcoriza, because he wanted to satisfy the "insatiable curiosity of the guest of honor, don Luis Buñuel." Buñuel, García Márquez continues, "came up with every imaginable conjecture about the art of correcting, not in order to improve, but to conceal."[1]

Buñuel was notorious for feeding the press—and indeed everyone else—versions of his life that were often fanciful, especially regarding any subject he considered touchy. This is particularly true of *Mon dernier soupir* (*My Last Sigh),* the often misleading memoir that was actually written by his long-time collaborator Jean-Claude Carrière. In *Objects of Desire: Conversations with Luis Buñuel*, the Mexican filmmakers José de la Colina and Tomás Pérez Turrent admit that "the process of the book was a real battle, a constant pursuit of somebody who often came out victorious," hence the title of the Spanish edition: *Prohibido asomarse al interior* ("Forbidden to Look Inside" 8).

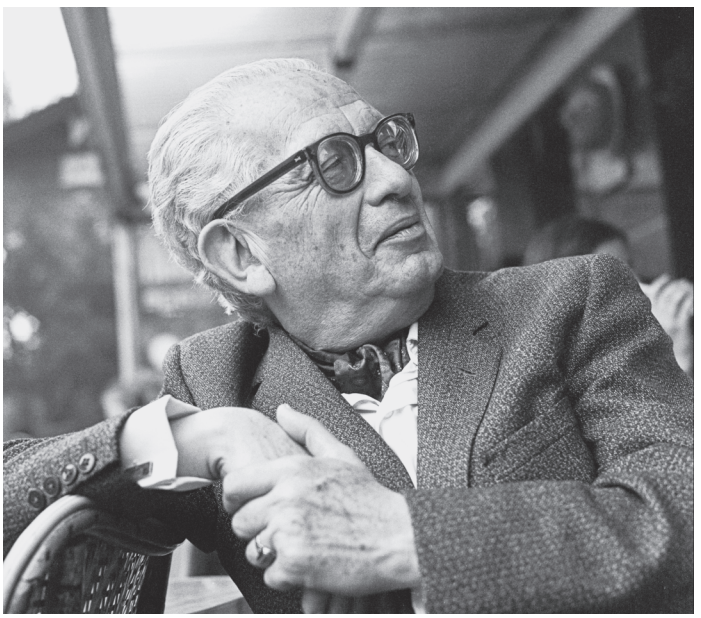
But Buñuel was hard put to deceive Aub, who knew him and his circumstances in ways that few interviewers could claim. They first met in Paris in 1925, later worked together in the embassy of the Spanish Republic—which, in addition to the usual embassy duties, engaged in a concerted public relations effort for the Republic, and also acted as a center of pro–Republican espionage—during the Civil War, and both wound up spending most of their adult lives in Mexico.[2] Aub's "mano a mano" with the director is reinforced by his interviews with friends and relations that are also revealing. In conjunction, this series of interviews gives an overview of the filmmaker's life and art that is notably absent from other books on the subject. It remains, in the words of Agustín Sánchez Vidal, "one of the best sources of information on the filmmaker."[3] The many different visions of Buñuel provided not only by his friends and relations but also by the filmmaker himself made him a particularly elusive subject, and Aub finally decided that instead of trying to reconcile these different impressions, he would include them all—or almost all—"not so the reader could choose between them, but to present them all as true, which indeed they are in some sense."

In 1967, Aub was urged to write a book on Buñuel by the editors of Aguilar, a major publishing company in Spain. He accepted the charge, and in the late 1960s, he began a series of interviews, not only with Buñuel, but also with his family, friends and collaborators. The interviews would take him from Mexico to Spain (which he had not visited since the end of the Civil War), France and Italy. To conduct these interviews, he outfitted himself with an invention that was just taking off in popularity: the cassette recorder.

Thanks, in part, to this mechanism, the book is notable for the presence of so many different voices—caught on tape and later transcribed by the author—that reach us from different cultures and times, not just because of their memories of early twentieth-century Aragón and Madrid, and of Paris in the twenties and thirties, as well as the U.S. in the forties and Mexico in the forties and fifties, but also their expression of the late sixties and early seventies in these places, voices, primarily of men, with no sense of the politically correct speech that marks so many of our present-day utterances.

In addition to the interviews, Aub also began to collect ancillary material on the filmmaker, other artists and the period. With the passage of time, as he explains in his prologue, his vision of the book developed, and he began to see it as one of his own novels, in some of which apocryphal artists are treated as though they were real, given a body of work, reviews, press releases and so on (most notably in *Jusep Torres Campalans*), while in others real figures are treated as though they were fictional creations. In all of them, the intent is to portray a period, a place, a movement as well as a personality. "This accumulation," Aub writes in his prologue here, "can be blamed on a certain way—a style, say—of writing books that are neither novels nor biographies, nor chronicles, nor essays, but a combination of all, mixed in with photographs that clarify the text and fragments of other books. I have worked with all this in my effort to discover the *raison d'être* behind Buñuel's work."

Alas, Aub died of a heart attack on 22 July 1972, just as he was setting up the table for a poker game with friends. He had barely begun to organize his material. He left Federico Álvarez, his son-in-law and also a respected literary scholar, with the unenviable familial duty of ordering the more than one hundred folders—over twenty of them included notes for the prologue—along with five thousand or so typed pages, copious hand-written folios and a healthy assortment of ephemera related to his subject, into a coherent manuscript of a viable size.



Max Aub in Paris, 1969 (photographed by Antonio Gálvez; courtesy of the Fundación Max Aub).

Although Álvarez set off with the idea of carrying on his father-in-law's "novel," in which he would view the twentieth century—particularly the avant-garde artistic and literary movements and the Spanish Civil War and subsequent exile of so many artists and intellectuals—by focusing on Buñuel, he realized soon enough that this would involve extensive writing on his own part, so he ultimately decided to focus solely on the interviews while retaining parts of Aub's unfinished

prologues (with their inconsistencies and repetitions, the two prologues published in the Spanish version read like drafts that Aub would have organized later) and to make what cuts he deemed necessary in the material to keep the book to a manageable size. The title *Conversaciones con Buñuel, seguidas de 45 entrevistas con familiares, amigos y colaboradores* (Conversations with Buñuel, Followed by 45 Interviews with Relatives, Friends and Colleagues) sums up the book he finally decided to turn over to Aguilar after wrestling with the material for some thirteen years. Buñuel, who had showed a lively interest in Álvarez's work (Sánchez Vidal, "Buñuel de carne y hueso" 1), must have concluded, not without a sense of relief, that the book would never see the light of day.

Aub's original concept, or at least a version of it, would have to wait until 2013, when the Venezuelan author Carmen Peire published *Buñuel, novela* (Buñuel, a novel) (Cuadernos del Vigía), an edition based as closely as possible on Aub's original intentions for the work as they were revealed in an outline she discovered in the Fundación Max Aub, which houses Aub's papers. Her book includes the interviews with Buñuel—organized by theme, as well as a DVD of a number of these interviews, which is moving in the extreme—and Aub's own biography of Buñuel along with his discussions of the artistic, literary and political movements of the twentieth century. It emphasizes, then, the significance of Aub's work as a writer and a witness of his time, and it has been rightfully heralded for its realization, in so far as possible, of the last work of one of Spain's critical twentieth-century writers, a man whose recognition had been partially eclipsed by his prolonged exile.

What Peire's work does not include are the interviews with Buñuel's friends and relations, which are of huge testimonial value to the Buñuel scholar. For that reason, it is the earlier version I have chosen to translate, considering that the interest of the English-speakers will be piqued most surely by what will for them be a new approach to the filmmaker.

The interviews, both with witnesses and with Buñuel himself, were not without problems. Most of the subjects were willing to speak into the recorder, but Buñuel was less than happy about it. On some days—presumably when his hearing was particularly bad—he forced Aub to take notes instead. Some of the other interviewees, most of whom had reached a certain age, also had problems with hearing. The quality of the tapes varies greatly as well, depending on the background noise and where the microphone was positioned. There were also, of course, as Aub admits readily, the problems of memory and of bad faith.

The mass of material Aub had gathered for his project spent some time on the road. The interviews he conducted in Europe returned with him to Mexico, where he lived and worked. After Aub's death in 1972, Federico Álvarez took the material with him to Madrid, where he was living at the time as director of the Spanish branch of a prominent Mexican publishing house (the Fondo de Cultura Económica). His book did not come out until 1985. Ultimately, the material wound up at the Fundación Max Aub in the small town of Segorbe, about an hour from Valencia, the city where Aub had spent his formative years. In the course of its travels, parts of the material went astray: notes and transcripts, some of the taped interviews with Buñuel and with his friends and relations. We know that interviews were conducted with two of his long-term co-writers and also with Pepín Bello, intimate friend from the days of the Residencia, of Buñuel, Dalí and Lorca and, some would say, the real genius behind *Un Chien andalou* (*An Andalusian Dog*) (Sánchez Vidal, "Buñuel

de carne" 3). I was, fortunately, able to find the Alcoriza interview at the Fundación, and I have included it here; however, the other two have eluded me, and I suspect that even more are missing in action.

I have added numerous endnotes to this edition to explain references probably familiar to its original Spanish-speaking readership, but not necessarily to early 21st century English speakers. All of the endnotes are mine. I have also included a detailed index and a brief bibliography, focusing on recent studies (by and large available only in Spanish) that clarify many points in the anecdotes and declarations that make up these conversations. I have corrected the spelling on some of the names. The mysterious Navás, for example, who was as addicted as Buñuel to the art of disguise, becomes José María Navaz, in later years a prominent oceanographer (e-mail from Alfredo Valverde of 11 December 2015).

Further, I have incorporated interviews or parts of interviews discovered at the Aub foundation that do not make up a part of the original book: the interview with Alcoriza and a chunk of an interview with Federico Amérigo, which does much to explain Buñuel's working methods, both of which Federico Álvarez assures me was not part of the material he handled, and part of an interview with Pedro Portabella, which may have been excluded earlier because of the subject's notorious unreliability, but which includes a very amusing and telling anecdote that rings true.

To keep the book down to a workable length and to sustain the reader's interest, I have, at Federico Álvarez's suggestion, cut out repetitions (unless they are notable for their differences), removed those interviews or parts of interviews that add little to our knowledge of Buñuel, whether because the speaker was circumspect, had limited knowledge of the director or focused on subjects that might be interesting in their own right—often in relation to the culture of the time—but that add little to what we know about Buñuel (email of November 6, 2014). The following interviews have been omitted in their entirety: María Buñuel, Miguel Zapater, Pablo Cistue de Castro, Señora de Jiménez Fraud, Rafael Martínez Nadal, María Teresa León, Charles de Noailles, Arturo Ripstein, Rodolfo Usigli, José Berzosa, Pierre Prévert and Pierre Abraham. When I have deleted portions of interviews, I indicate as much in the body of the text.

The original work makes plentiful use of ellipses, and it is often not clear if they indicate an omission or a pause. I have checked these against transcriptions when I could, but that has not always been possible. In those cases, I have used my own judgment. I have also found points when a paragraph changes tack so abruptly that it clearly encompasses two different conversations or two different points in the same conversation. I have indicated what seems like different conversations with a line of asterisks.

Álvarez divided the interviews into three parts and organized them, he writes, with the idea "of establishing some sense of continuity by following—as much as possible—a chronological order that would not break up the flow of the dialogues." I have respected this order; however, I have dropped the tripartite division, since it suggests the material is made up of three long interviews. In fact, it involves numerous interviews of wildly varying lengths taking place over a period of several years. Virtually none of these interviews are dated, so there is no question of following the chronological order of the conversations themselves. On the few occasions when Aub indicated the date and/or place of an interview (primarily with the director's family, friends and colleagues), I have included that information.

In my translation (and in my endnotes as well), I have tried to keep the informal tone of the interviews and also to convey something of the atmosphere by retaining those Spanish expressions or words that readers will be able to follow (*señor, don, plaza, ¡hombre!* etc.).

To avoid "cluttering" the text, I give the original title of the works mentioned here—if they are in Spanish or French—and provide the English translation in brackets at the first mention, but rely on the original title after that. If they are in another language, I simply provide the English title. If the first mention is followed by an endnote with more information, I give the English translation in the footnote rather than in brackets, again with the idea of keeping the body of the text as smooth as possible. The listing of Buñuel's films in the bibliography provides the release date in the original language, the original title and the English version, as well as variations on the title(s) if there are any.

In the case of places, languages and nationality—if an English version is widely accepted, I use it (Saragossa instead of Zaragoza; Catalonian instead of Catalán). If this isn't the case, I use the Spanish with whatever accents are required. I should note that Buñuel's wife Jeanne is often referred to by Spaniards as Juana or Juanita, the Spanish form of her name.

Translating these interviews from the late 1960s and early 1970s that so often evoke the early twentieth century, trying to convey the ambience of the actual conversations as well as the earlier times they conjure up, tracing the figures referred to so casually, figures that for us have become shadowy (and, in some cases, really did operate in the shadows) has been a fascinating pursuit. I can only hope that readers will share this interest and come to a more intimate understanding of Luis Buñuel and the world he lived in.

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Personal Prologue

Max Aub

Today, Sunday, 3 January 1971, after two and a half years of preparation, I am starting to organize all of my papers related to Luis Buñuel, who is now becoming a fictional character. I'm still not entirely sure of my approach. Fictional characters don't change. Buñuel lives and will die sometime. The Buñuel who comes out of this pile of documents, memories that have been turned into pages, will he survive? That's why I need to finish this book, so that it's not the end of me. In the last years, this is what has been worrying me. My body is in bad shape, and my memory feels the pain (proof that memory is not really related to intelligence although intelligence helps). It's the first time I've ever faced a sheet of paper with the fear—and it's well founded—that I won't finish what I've begun.

Oddly enough, exactly the same thing is happening to my character, who has told me that he won't start another film because of his fear of dying before it's done. I don't want to believe in premonitions. My heart will have to make the decision, and I don't write with it, but rather with my head, with words and paper. I don't lack the desire.

In spite of all my acknowledgments of gratitude, I should make it clear that I alone have written this book. I looked for everything. I stole everything. I'm sorry that I could not invent history. What has happened has happened. I have tried to stick to the facts. I am responsible for what I've seen. The rest, which is to say the greatest part of the book, appears as it was told to me. I don't have time to list all my sources. I cite the ones I noted down. Sometimes I was careless about it, and, in this huge labyrinth of mixed up papers, I cannot find the index card. I'm sorry. I am also uncertain just what—out of this pile of information, facts, conversations, lucubrations, essays and sketches—will be published.

Everyone who helped me will be mentioned here, except those who preferred to remain anonymous. They will recognize themselves. Thanks to all of them and thanks—most especially—to Luis Buñuel for everything he said and everything he did not say even though he himself will admit that he could have helped me more.

* * *

To make it easier for people to understand Luis Buñuel's films, which are so personal, I want to understand this strange being who makes his way through the world, horrified by spiders. An entomologist, as well, so he knows what they are. This peculiar atheist who speaks constantly of the Catholic Church. This collector of firearms who turns out to be just an average coward—no more nor less than the next man—and flees from every fight, even

the ones that serve his ideas. In order to make sense of his films, we have to try to find out who he is.

It is impossible to paint a portrait of anyone except from the angle of the viewer. Who does Buñuel, the subject of so many different portraits, resemble? An ideal that exists only in the mind of the person who says, Luis Buñuel. However, by comparing different accounts, perhaps we can come to an approximate "sketch" of the man, following the procedure of the police. What emerges is not the person as he actually is, but as he is seen. So I turn to the people who know, or knew him, in one place or another, to a greater or lesser degree, as a professional, a friend, a dinner guest, a boss, an associate, a student. To form an image, I would need ten or fifteen thousand facets to my eyes, like certain insects, and even then I might not dare to print what people who envy him say. Perhaps, some day, a computer could come close to providing a portrait. In the meantime, only the characters in fiction have a firm outline, and they are what they are because their creator describes them that way. Buñuel escapes my grasp again and again, unlike my character Campalans, whom I have fixed in print.[1]

The people I've interviewed sometimes refused to speak for reasons of self-interest, prudence, art, hypocrisy, pleasure or ignorance, and when they did speak, it was often for the very same reasons. Yet, still, comparing all these opinions, perhaps Buñuel's figure as a person will become a little—just a little—clearer. I've gone to a number of different places to talk to people who might help me reconstruct the puzzle of Luis Buñuel. I spent two years of my old life doing it, and I fell short—of time and money. It is still just an attempt. Others will come along and make a better job of it. The technique works.

The worst part is that even the most reliable people may be convinced they remember things that are just plain wrong. With this huge mass of material, gathering together many fragments, I've tried to follow the course of a few of the events in the life of Luis Buñuel. When two or three accounts coincide, I've taken them as truthful. I've felt much less convinced by a single account, unless it was recent. I don't even attempt to deal with documents here. Enough of them are within reach of whoever wants to take the trouble to read them. The documents, however, also lie. Why shouldn't they? Less, perhaps, because they reach a greater number of people, or—for the very same reason—maybe even more. A newspaper isn't the Bible, and only God knows how many lies are piled up there.

This book is, then, plagiarized from history, as others saw it, and from the life, according to the interpretation of many people, of Luis Buñuel. I would like it to be both an inspired and a mundane likeness. I don't have the facility of a painter. I move things around, omit, mimic and—in extreme instances—I sketch a likeness in words (which is to falsify, something I've avoided as much as could). How can you make the copy fit a living original?

Since I didn't want to invent, I stole: I copied, robbed, transcribed. If this book finds readers, and if after finishing it, they have before them a man, a character, no matter what he's like, but with all his attributes, his youth, his maturity, his old age. If they have a clear image (formed out of thousands) of what his period was like, it doesn't matter that one piece has come out of a newspaper, or a conference, or a book, or a story, or a lie. I tried to stick to what I felt was the truth, but who can tell me I was right? As my work progressed, I realized that there was no way to single out what actually happened. I shrugged my shoulders and decided to tell all the versions, not so the reader could choose between them, but

to present them all as true, which indeed they are in some sense. Only God knows, but I doubt if he amuses himself with the kind of second-hand wisdom represented by memory. God is pure future.

Buñuel is not God. Luis Buñuel is a man with a view of life characteristic of his time. He has tried—with some success—to express it in a singular body of work. He's not God, except for a few followers, who form not a religion, but, at most, a sect.

Buñuel is not God, which is to say he exists. Of course, a few gods do exist: Picasso, or Leonardo [da Vinci], or Shakespeare or Cervantes. You see it in everything they touch. Things are different with Buñuel. He made a lot of films that could have been made by anyone, doing it in order to survive. None of them—he emphasizes it—betray his vision of life, but they don't all present it either. From this angle, his serious works, like every creator's, are not very numerous, but they are sufficient. The problem of Lope [de Vega] and of Federico [García Lorca], if he had lived, is different. They were gods, but also spendthrifts, like Picasso. It's as though a piece, a detail, were enough to show their genius. Buñuel is different: he takes up a work with real determination. "I'm making this so we can eat" (and it will be just good enough not to embarrass him). Or, "This is something where I can express myself." We've all done the same thing and, like Buñuel, stopped just short of prostituting our talent—except for Dalí, who didn't stop.

This book is roughly constructed and badly written, because it's not written; it's spoken. Apart from a few special souls—mostly pedants—we speak badly as a rule, worse every day. Most of the time, Buñuel refused to have our conversations taped. Probably they're the better for it. Dialogues—even when they're touched up—tend to be flat; they're only sparked by the life they represent. If this book were a film, it might not be bad. Both are in movement.

I've used the word *novel* to describe this book because I want to get as close as possible to the truth. The anecdotes, the stories, what is invented about a character or an event, offer a much better way of knowing the person or what happened than actual documents. Will you get a better sense of Buñuel if I reproduce his birth certificate or if I repeat stories about his youthful indiscretions, even if the stories are hard to verify?

Following generations will, if they exist, find material here from first-hand speakers. I only take responsibility for what I say myself. For the first time in my work, whenever it was possible, I made use of a cassette recorder. This, of course, doesn't make this book any more authentic than other books (by the same token, documentary films aren't necessarily trustworthy just because they're "documentaries"). The fact is: neither Buñuel nor I was as interested in truth as in justice.

Each historian writes his own version of history. Sometimes their accounts are so different they have nothing in common. The little things, what the French call "la petite histoire," have the advantage of providing a closer view of events, of keeping the teller from imposing his own general ideas and interests on the material and of allowing the reader to be his own historian. I'm more interested in these ephemera which are so often forgotten, but which give our lives and times their texture. My subtitle—*A Novel*—springs from that interest. I don't know if Aragon was moved by the same thinking in his Matisse book.[2]

This "novel" will not be a history of Luis Buñuel; nor will it be a study of the twentieth century, but rather a hybrid, as works of art these days have, indeed, become: theater which isn't theater, novels which aren't novels, poetry which isn't poetry. It's clear that I saw Buñuel

with the same eyes that saw my fictional characters. What follows here may be a string of lies or half-truths—it doesn't really matter which—but I write this book in the hope that the result will reveal the assumptions—my own and others—that explain why we were what we were.

This book, I repeat, is nothing but another novel, similar to ones I've already written: a bag of clippings, memories, jokes, events, emptied out over the tapestry of its period. What can I do? I don't know how to write any other way, or about anything else? I'm lying: I'm not really interested in writing about something else.

Now that I've been working on this book for years, the time has come to look back over the huge quantity of material that I've gathered and to see where it has led me. This accumulation can be blamed on a certain way—a style, say—of writing books that are neither novels nor biographies, nor chronicles, nor essays, but a combination of all, mixed in with photographs that clarify the text and fragments of other books. I have worked with all this in my effort to discover the *raison d'être* behind Buñuel's work.

And it turns out that my character is his era; that is, the influence his era had on him: religion, the Jesuits, prostitutes, Federico García Lorca, red wine, Calanda, his mother, Fritz Lang, Dalí, Wagner, Freud, Breton, Benjamin Péret, surrealism in general, and communism in particular.

Like all of us, he was influenced by the hot wars and the cold war. His era—our era—is reflected in him in a privileged and profound way and is highlighted in his work and his life with absolute normality. With the absolute normality—it has to be said—that, in the twentieth century, is represented by surrealism.

A person doesn't have a choice of when he's born. That's how it is. I was born at noon, on 2 July 1903, in Paris, according to the registrar's office in the ninth district. My mother's first memory was of the burial of Victor Hugo and, perhaps, of the ceremonial return of Napoleon's ashes.[3] I had to discover the names of [the poets] Baudelaire and Rimbaud myself, of course. I was always a man of letters and not, like Buñuel, of hunting and fist-fighting. He traveled from the country to the city; I traveled in the opposite direction, at least for my holidays. I must have been seven or eight when I discovered the sea and the tides at Berk Plage, and it was winter. Luis spent his summers in San Sebastián, by the Cantabrian Sea. He was from a rich family, and mine was barely bourgeois. His father, who was old, lived off his rents; mine, young, had to work. His father no longer traveled; mine was on the road constantly.… I'm only three years younger than he, not enough to matter. We're alike in many ways, in others not. Even with our very different personalities, we've had many points of contact.… We both reached maturity in a country that was not our birthplace, and we both created the greater part of our work far from home, yet everybody defines us—and rightly so—as Spanish. We must have started writing verses at about the same time. We had many common acquaintances from our youth. I lost interest in the avant-garde long before he did. Yet we both wound up with a passion for Galdós, and we both got involved in film at about the same time. The biggest difference between us is religious. Both of us are atheists, but he's an atheist with Catholic roots and my roots are with the free-thinkers. This is more important than the shared environments of Madrid, Paris and Mexico.

He's a Spaniard, married to a Frenchwoman, who became a Mexican. I, a Frenchman, married to a Spanish woman who became a Mexican. He has one son that's French, another

that's North American. One of them is married to a North American with Jewish roots. I have three daughters, one married to an Englishman, another to a Cuban and the third to a Mexican.

So much for our lives. Perhaps we should both die in Mexico. It would be fair. As far as our work goes, we're both Spaniards. We studied for our secondary-school degrees, and we grew up on the peninsula. We're both products of Spanish and French cultures. Anglo-Saxon culture affected us in questions of style, but not of the heart.

Apart from religion, the fundamental difference between us is in our politics. He's more interested in justice than in truth. Not I. If he ever actually joined the Communist Party is a problem that doesn't bother me; I haven't resolved it, and I don't care.[4] He helped the communists—there's no doubt about that—they were and they remain his best friends and, as his friends, they're important to me. I was and, unfortunately, still am, a socialist, which is to say, far more liberal than he is. There's no difference in the end. Both groups had a bad time of it.

We married very beautiful women, who had nothing to do with our work. He was richer than I because of his family, but money was never a real problem for either one of us. Since he was luckier that way, perhaps he was a little more attracted to money than I, but possibly in his situation I would have done more or less the same thing. He was more frightened than I by the events that overtook us, but that fear is not reflected in his work, and the work is what matters.

Even more profound than our political differences was the matter of our religious education, the effect, in his case, of the intransigent Catholicism of his mother, whom he adored. My mother was completely agnostic, and my parents had no influence on my education or not much, considering that we were, after all, a bourgeois family. We both traveled a lot, saw many things and tried to be aware of what was happening in the world. He was physically stronger than I, an athlete, but I was healthy enough. Love, something that could threaten his sense of self and might well lead to sin and condemnation, was almost foreign to him, but justice and truth were the water from which we both drank, the best parts of what we produced. He was much more successful than I, at least in commercial terms, but that didn't matter to either of us. Glory is a different thing. He says he doesn't care about it, but he's lying.

We both grew up with books, magazines, news, but that's not what formed us. Something else did. I'm not trying to be too picky. If I've devoted the last years (I was going to say, not without reason, "of my life") to reconstructing his milieu, it's because it's like mine. I've always liked using others as a barrier between myself and my experiences whether out of cowardice or modesty or both. To thumb through magazines from 1920 and watch films from 1930, to read recent books and studies about the past is like returning to a country that has been buried. I may have taken a wrong turning in my work. Perhaps I should have explained myself with novels in which events don't play the role I grant them in almost everything I've written, but I prefer to mix day and night, the dreamlike with the rational, the truth with lies so that by wearing a disguise I approach the ultimate, unreachable, truth. Novels written out of context, like so many these days, strike me as exercises in rhetoric, classes in embalming, too easy and too long. They may be fun to write, but not to read.

Yet I don't agree with Sartre, who insisted that our works are meaningless alongside

someone who's dying of hunger. He had the nerve to say this while publishing *Les Mots* [*The Words,* his autobiography]. My novels never ignore the comings and goings of history.

I've seen too much to ignore. Because of his work, my father traveled throughout Spain. In 1898 he was going about his business. I don't think Spain's loss of Cuba in that year [considered a national disgrace] made any greater an impression on him than the Sino-Russian or the Boer wars. In the twentieth century, when we began to have real armies, wars became a constant. There were less than twenty years between the end of the First World War and the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, which, in turn, was separated by only a few months from the Second World War.[5] Add to that the endless series of revolutions, including the Russian one, which was as bloody as the French. The birth and growth of fascism happened alongside the Great Depression of 1929—another sort of war—not to mention the disappearance of the Hohenzollerns in Germany, the Hapsburgs in Austria and Spain, the Manchu Dynasty in China, the Romanovs in Russia and the miserable end of the Turkish Empire. The two great powers [the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.] emerged. The fall of the European empires was orchestrated with the explosion of the atom bomb and the conquest of space, and all this was followed by the shattering of the communist empire, which had clung to a unilateral, bureaucratic and conservative interpretation of the theories of Marx; and by the desperate intent of the Catholic Church to survive, along with the irresistible rise of the theories of Einstein and Bohr and Freud, the partial replacement of rationalism by its opposite number, the fall of the kingdoms of Italy and Greece, the apparition of fifty new republics and the resurgence of China under Mao Zedung, and finally the total transformation of the means of communication and publicity which most people cannot even follow because it means the loss of their past.

The twentieth century has witnessed the funeral procession of the cultural inheritance we most valued. The change started at the end of the nineteenth century, but the new aesthetic—and the new politics—which would transform the physiognomy of the century only emerged in the thirties. *L'Âge d'or* [*The Golden* Age] coincides with the North American Depression and the early stages of Stalinism. There's nothing new about this: all periods have their disagreements and contradictions. Our words suddenly sound hollow; words have a life and death. Like manure, they go on to serve a different spirit. When men risk their lives, it's usually for the truth, but the truth changes with the light. Perhaps what's missing, at least as our tired eyes see it, is piety. Everything is a ruse. From looking ahead so much, we forget who we were. We repeat things without realizing that they've already been said and said well in books we haven't bothered to read.

I don't know if what I've said explains my intent here. I hope that the reader realizes that the point of view is mine alone. In other words, I've chosen where the camera should be positioned. That's all.

* * *

Everyone who helped me will be mentioned here, except those who preferred to remain anonymous. They will recognize themselves. Thanks to all of them and thanks—most especially—to Luis Buñuel for everything he said and everything he did not say even though he himself will admit that he could have helped me more.

Foreword to the 1985 Edition

Federico Álvarez

When Max Aub died on 22 July 1972, in Mexico City, his work table was covered with over a hundred folders, some five thousand typed pages, related to his projected "novel" centering on his old friend the great filmmaker Luis Buñuel. The idea of writing a book about Buñuel had been suggested to him in 1967 by Agustín Caballero, Enrique Montoya and Antonio Ruano of Aguilar Press, who offered him all the freedom he might need for that work. Aub accepted their proposal with great interest. From that point until his death, all his strength, which was dwindling day by day, and all his time, which was increased by his amazing work ethic, were dedicated to this project.

About a third of the material that he had written was made up of literal transcriptions of the conversations that he recorded with Buñuel and with many of the director's relations, friends and collaborators in Mexico, Madrid, Paris and Rome. Another third was comprised of material that he had not written himself: documents from various periods, surrealist texts and images, quotes, chronologies, old film reviews, press clippings. He also compiled an exhaustive collection of everything written by Buñuel, from his first poems and film reviews up to and including the screenplays of works that were never filmed. Finally, in twenty something folders, Aub had gathered together notes for his prologue, his own reflections on surrealism, on his generation and on the book itself which he would form from that heap of primary material.

Some of these notes take on a tone that is subjective and intimate, suggesting the increasing anguish brought on by the overwhelming accumulation of material. The initial idea (a likeness of Buñuel, a biography, a reflection on his work) gave way quickly to the much more ambitious project of using Buñuel's life and work as a point of departure for writing a great novelistic testimony that would portray the cultural and social reality of the 1920s in Spain, and its succession in Paris and, after the death of the Republic, in exile.

Aub had just published one book and was preparing another for publication. At some point he realized they were predecessors of what would wind up being his posthumous work. The first of these two books, a "biography" of the apocryphal painter Jusep Torres Campalans, provided him with a formal model that seemed well adapted to his "novel" about the very real, and surreal, Aragonese filmmaker. This model relied on unraveling the basic structural elements of all narration—events, characters, atmosphere, ideas—and pre-

senting them consecutively so that each would reveal a sense of irony in relation to the genre of the new book that was taking form. Would it be a narrative, an essay, a piece of history or a biography?

The second of these books, *La gallina ciega* ("Blind Man's Bluff"), a passionate, profuse and exuberant summing up his first return to Spain since the loss of the war (for many readers, it is his best work) gradually began to provide the experiential counterpart to his novel about the "Republican" generation, and this became, after the fact, his primary theme. Finally, a third book, one known to Aub only by reputation—Louis Aragon's *Matisse, roman* (Matisse, a novel)—rounded off the ideas he had taken from the other two books and helped him shape his ideas.

Max Aub began, then, to reconstruct the life of Buñuel and his generation not as a biographer or historian, but as a novelist. At first glance, he seems more like an anthropologist faithful to the methods of oral history, but a closer look shows the voice of the narrator, with his emphasis on the most telling details, phrases, gestures, simultaneously destroyed and preserved in his literary creation.

When he died, Aub left the work unfinished and unfinishable. Someone who read all those papers might think, for an instant, that the promised book was alive in those pages and that it only demanded patience and editing. But from the very beginning, it became obvious that it demanded words, new words that weren't yet written, words that no sane person would take it on himself to add. The only alternative was, then, to fall back on those papers and, without adding anything, cut them down to the size of a normal book, preserving the most critical parts and discarding what could be discarded, eliminating the repetitions, cleaning up the rhetoric of the recordings and establishing some sense of continuity by following—as much as possible—a chronological order that would not break up the flow of the dialogues.

Another point demanded attention as well: sensitive references about third persons or Buñuel himself. More than once, I heard Aub say—when we were reading over the texts that came out of the transcriptions—he would have to do without careless or unfounded comments that might inflict harm. He said often, "Luis will have to read it all before it goes to press, so that nothing will come out that offends him." When I talked with don Luis about it, once my final selection was made, I had to really insist just to get him to read a few parts of it. "Put everything in. Don't worry. If somebody says I was in love with my mother, let it stay. If somebody says I'm homosexual, let it stay. Put in everything, everything." I refused in a few instances. I gave him examples. He only hesitated when third persons were involved. "Okay, in those cases, don't use the names, just use the initials." We laughed. The initials wouldn't hide anything. By the second martini, he showed his great generosity: "Look. Do what you think is best. With the passage of time, only half of half will remain. Really. Use your own judgement. I have faith in you." Later, when he was in Madrid, he would sometimes phone me: "How is all that going?" And I know that, after a time, he had become convinced the book would never see the light of day.

It was painful to think what Max Aub would have done with all that material and to go over the originals that I was handing over to the press. Yet now, after re-reading for the hundredth time the pages that follow, I can just discern in its lines Aub's "novel," at least its essence. It springs from the ebb-and-flow of the conversations between these two old friends, in their unaffected intelligence, their sharp humor and their innate goodness. And

when, a third into the book, others start to make their appearance: childhood friends, friends from the Residencia de Estudiantes,[6] girlfriends, comrades from Paris and from the war, other filmmakers, everything is multiplied and enriched as in a great novel. The reader will decide if these are just the papers on Buñuel that Max Aub left unedited or if the intense work embodied here achieves the quality that would allow us to call them *Buñuel: A Novel*.

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Part I

Conversations with Buñuel

The Part I conversations are all conducted by Max Aub

There's no real reason to ask this question, because he probably won't answer, or he'll lie, maybe just a little, maybe a lot, depending on his mood.

"When you're writing a film, do you do it for yourself or for other people? To help the world, or to spit in the face of the banker who lives on the corner?"

"To make money. To keep from being bored. To do something."

"To make your mark?"

"The material of film doesn't last very long. In fifty years, when everybody is old and bald, my films will be nothing but dust."

"A lot of books have been written about your films. I don't want to write another of those, but instead a book about Luis Buñuel, author of films. If I've agreed to do it, it's not with the idea of comparing you to Chaplin or Fellini, or comparing *Viridiana* (*Viridiana*) with *Simón del desierto* (*Simon of the Desert*). I don't want to write a biography either. What I have in mind is a portrait in motion, something like Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase,* to see if a reader can look at this "painting" and see Luis Buñuel himself, along with our era, in bits and pieces, but still all there, if not forever, at least for a while."

"You've got your work cut out for you."

"It's not the work that scares me; it's the time. We're both old, and I want to find what I'm looking for and what you're looking for. A person makes a lot of mistakes. My novels, the other ones, are different. I do what I want with my characters, and nobody complains. But you will certainly complain, and maybe you'll be right. We'll see."

"I hate for people to talk about me. I always have."

"I've already said; it's not going to be a book about you, but about our generation, which has lived through some pretty strange times. Who else has seen two world wars, with the Spanish war in between?"

And all the other wars as well, but Spain is still Spain, which is something. You don't have to raise your voice. With the hearing aid, I can hear you fine as long as you speak slowly."

"What I want to show is how, in a time like ours, born of the nineteenth century, which was always so rational, how a movement like surrealism, which was based on irreality, could, not just appear and disappear, but have a continuous, persistent effect. Or do you think that what happened last May [1968] in Paris had nothing to do with surrealism?"[1]

"Of course it did. I jumped for joy, because I was actually in the middle of a surrealist moment. May 1968 was pure surrealism. But when Arrabal told me they were going to put

my name down as one of the people who authorized what they called the occupation of the university, I said no, absolutely not, because the police would pull up and throw everybody out right away. I told him the day they started a real revolution, I'd be glad to sign on. Of course, he didn't pay any attention to me, and they put my name down."[2]

"Another false accusation shouldn't surprise you…"

"You can't imagine. Just the other day, a French newspaper said that here in Mexico I go to mass every Saturday in order to collect consecrated hosts; I take them home, put them in cricket cages and tell them, 'Sing, little host, sing, or something nasty will happen to you.' And then, of course, I flush them down the toilet. Since they published the piece when I was in Spain, I squelched the story. It's unbelievable how many crazy things they've invented about me."

"Your father was in Havana for a long time, wasn't he?"

"Yes. My father spent thirty years in Havana. From 1868 to 1898, the year he returned to Spain and got married, and then I was born."

"Which factory was it that sent arms to your father in Cuba?"

"Smith…. Smith."

"The famous Smith."

"I think it was Smith, and Remington, too, both of them. Because he sold arms, things for ships, I don't know what all. Pitch, rope, sails. It was a big hardware store with a little bit of everything, right? And every once in a while they gave him the kind of present that a manufacturer gives a retailer, you know, a Smith revolver with his initials on it, then later on a Winchester rifle. He didn't depend on just one supplier; he had a few different ones."

"When he saw the explosion on the *Maine,* did he ever tell you about his reaction?"

"Yes. Yes, he told me about it. He was in his office when it happened. The store was on Lamparilla, number 3. That's the street where the hardware store was. Later they changed the name of the store to Casteleiro and Vizoso, my father's associates."

"A hardware store?"

"Yes, a hardware store, where they also sold things for ships. On the calle de Lamparilla, number 3, close to the port. I've never been to Havana. When my father decided he had made enough money, he sold the business to two of his employees, and 'Casteleiro and Vizoso' was well known in Havana for a long time. One of the partners was from Galicia, and the other, from Asturias."

"They seem to have done well with the business."

"They started out as clerks. Until Castro came in, they had one of the biggest fortunes in Havana. They were very, very well known. The ones who were contemporary with my father must have died long since, but the children kept the business going. It was always in the same place…. I think it was in the port, a street that was part of the port itself. You can see the boats from there, I think, and my father heard the explosion and saw the boat blown up. It was a huge catastrophe, and it gave Cervera the opportunity for his famous phrase: 'I prefer boats with honor, than boats without honor,' something to that effect."[3]

"Yes, but that happened in Santiago."

"No, I think it was Cervera in the Cuban war."

"Yes, but it happened in Santiago, Cuba."

"Well, I'm not sure. Do you want some coffee?"

"Yes. "

He gets up with that walk of his, his arms hanging a little forward and his feet dragging a bit, heading toward the inside of the house. He comes back carrying Kyrou's book.[4]

"Here it is. I'll lend it to you."

We spend a little time looking at the photographs in the book: Buñuel as a soldier, in front of the portrait Dalí painted of him in '23. There's a whole life there. With age, a person just falls apart. This doesn't happen to our works if they're good. Why not?

"With your father spending so much time in Cuba, don't you think you might have some half-brothers or sisters there?"

"No, I don't think so. My father was like me, but more of a womanizer."

"But, how long was your father in Cuba?"

"Thirty years."

"From the time he was seventeen?"

"Yes."

"So?"

"Well, of course. But I don't believe he was the kind of person who would go to bed with black women or mulattos. You know I'm a racist (he winks), but I don't see myself with mulatto brothers and sisters. But I also don't believe he was the kind of man who goes home to get married and, while he's impregnating his wife, thinks about native women. Ugarte's father *was* that kind. Ugarte used to laugh when I said so."[5]

"There was a big age difference between your mother and father, wasn't there?"

"When he got married, my father must have been forty-two, and my mother, seventeen."

"She was from Alcañiz, wasn't she?"

"No, from Calanda. From a family that came from Upper Aragón.

…

"You know that, as interesting as Kyrou's book is, and as careful as he is about film, as soon as he mentions your life, he gets all the dates wrong."

"How can that be?"

"If you'd read it, you'd see."

"I did, but a long time ago. I probably wasn't paying attention. But it doesn't surprise me. He and I never really spoke seriously. We saw each other a few times; I don't remember if he took notes or not."

"It wouldn't matter except that people see it as something that's been published with your full approval, and then they repeat the mistakes."

"What, for example? Because I swear I don't remember, or like I do with most of these books, I probably just glanced at it."

"It starts off saying your father went to Cuba as a soldier and that he opened the store after the war [in 1898]. If that were true, you'd have been born in Cuba, because dates don't lie. He didn't know what he was talking about. Then he says that your mother went to Havana and that the family returned to Calanda in 1914."

"But my mother never went to Cuba!"

"I just told you that the book really messes up the dates. He says your father went back to Cuba in 1899."

"My father enlisted with ten others from Calanda. It must be a hundred years ago now. Yes, exactly, 1868, plus the thirty years he spent there, 1898, the date he returned to Spain. He gets married in 1899, and I'm born in 1900…. Just like I told you, my father signed up,

and his good handwriting saved his life. He had a beautiful handwriting. I still have his letters. They called him a penman. The thing is: when he wrote his application for the army, somebody said, 'This boy has good handwriting. He should stay here with us.' The other nine boys from Calanda were sent to the interior of the island, to fight the Mambises, and all nine of them died from yellow fever. When they discharged my father, he must have started working in a hardware store, and later on he set up his own business."[6]

"What was his name?"

"Leonardo. He tried to go back to Havana in 1912. He sensed that something was going to happen in Europe, a war for sure, and he wanted to get his money out. But he came back home after three months, disappointed and mad because his ex-employees didn't want to let him back in the business. I've never seen him so crestfallen [see Conchita Buñuel's comments in her interview]."

…

Luis was born in Calanda (in the province of Teruel) on 22 February 1900, on the Calle Mayor, across from the Plaza Manero. His father was named Leonardo, his mother, María, née Portolés. His godfather was Gaspar Homs, a man from Mallorca, who had been a friend and business partner of his father's in Havana; he had a business selling sponges. His godmother was Panchita Homs, Gaspar's wife. He was baptized on the ninth of March.

The first time he traveled was to his godparents' house in Palma de Mallorca in 1907, where he spent a month and a half.

Around that time, he had his first girlfriend: Pilarín Urazandi.

He had his first communion on 17 April 1910, at the Colegio de San Salvador, in Saragossa.

He got drunk for the first time when he was thirteen in a tavern in Saragossa, with Martín Sante and the three Barazas brothers. The tavern was named El Velódromo. It was a Thursday. They decided not to go to school. It was seven-thirty in the morning. The bar with filled with laborers on their way to work.

"We ordered chorizo and pure grain alcohol. I must have drunk about a quarter liter of liquor. Mantecón, who had a real mane of hair back then, was with us too [see interview]. I got sick as a dog. I threw up everything there was to throw up, and later I woke up in the infirmary with the nuns giving me a rub-down. I was so sick that not even my father said anything about it."

"I didn't know about Mantecón's long hair."

"Mantecón's long, blond hair.… I'll never forget it. When I want to make him mad, I remind him how Father Marcelo made him sit on his knees—he was so cute—and bit his little ear. But nothing dirty, eh? In that sense, the Jesuits were very vigilant. As far as I remember, nothing ever happened between anybody during the years I was with them. There was always a brother keeping an eye on us, no matter where we were. As soon as we got out of the sight of one, there'd be another one waiting. One finger in the air for a pee, two fingers for a poop, unless they ushered us into the bathroom all at once, then there'd be one bell for small stuff and two bells for big stuff."

"From what Mantecón tells me, you were only with the Jesuits for four years."

"No, no, no. I was with them seven years. From the time I was six."

"Okay, you're both right, because he was talking about secondary school."

"Right. I got my diploma from the state school."

"So, what are the exact dates?"

"With the Brothers of the Sacred Heart in Saragossa, from 1906 to 1908; with the Jesuits in the Colegio del Salvador in Saragossa, from 1908 to 1915, and the last two years of secondary school: 1915 to '16 and 1916 to '17—May of 1917—at the Institute of Secondary Instruction, in Saragossa, and in the fall of 1917, to Madrid, with my mother, to find a place to stay."

"There are lots of books about you filled with half truths. This makes things much more complicated. There's even somebody who says that you went to Madrid to study painting."

"Never."

"They also say that your initiation into atheism started with *The Origin of the Species*."

"That's right. When I was sixteen, Morquecho, a kid from Logroño who was in his first year in law school, lent me the three volumes the Sempere Press put out, and the works of Spencer and Haeckel.[7] Up until fourteen, I was a practicing Catholic—masses, rosaries, confessions—I took communion very frequently. Like everybody else in my family, except my father."

"Your father…. "

"My father was a nineteenth-century liberal. He went to mass to set an example, because he thought it was important, and he said that he took 'the sacraments of the altar' once a year. Who knows?"

"Your mother was very Catholic?"

"Very Catholic."

"And up until you were fourteen, you spent all your vacations in Calanda?"

"Yes, and later we went to San Sebastián. I was very young when we moved to Saragossa. The house has disappeared. It was on Independencia, number nineteen, by the old General Headquarters. It was on the corner; it had two floors and lots of balconies overlooking both streets. If I started counting, I would remember how many. The owner was named Rafael Pamplona."

"It's odd how certain things stay in our minds. And how did you lose your faith?"

"In the most common, banal way. I mean, like most people, when I was between fifteen and seventeen. By the time I was seventeen, I didn't believe in anything. At first, I felt a doubt, an underlying uncertainty about the existence of hell. The Jesuits made a real point about the existence of hell. About the eternal punishment meted out for our sins, especially the sins related to sex. One of my closest friends was Tomás Pelayo. We spend a lot of time together, and we talked about things. I used to spend part of every summer in Vega de Pas, in the area around Santander, where Dr. Madrazo, who was a sort of Marañon of the Mountains, had a famous sanitorium where they treated tuberculosis.[8] I was part of the family, the Pelayo family. Tomás and I slept together, I mean in the same room, and we used to talk and talk. I shared my doubts about hell with him, since it seemed set up expressly to punish our trivial sexual sins, because, of course, like all boys our age in Spain, we masturbated. How could it be that we'd spend all eternity suffering endless torments for something so insignificant? That's where it all started, when I was about fourteen or fifteen. It was a long process. I think I had lost faith completely by my seventeenth birthday. And, of course, I'd already started reading the books that Morquecho, who was in his first or second year of law school, lent me; I had gone on to Darwin and Nietzsche."

"It was all Blasco Ibánez's fault."

"Well, yes. The Prometeo collection. Because, like all of us, I started out reading the sociologists and the philosophers instead of literature. Around the age of fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, we were fascinated by the idea of society, how it was put together. Nowadays, when I talk about it with Dominicans or Jesuits, they agree with me that the loss of faith among Christian young people is due, first of all, to the obsession with hell that oozed out of all the schools they ran. All of that coincided almost automatically with the loss of virginity back then. We were terrified!"

"In fact, we're the last generation that lost sleep over the fear of venereal diseases."

"True. It's a consolation."

"And your attraction to the liturgy?"

"It's an attraction to the art of the thing, along with the music and the organ. I've always loved all that."

"Arturo Sáenz de la Calzada told me he was amazed how much you knew about theology" (see interview).

"Bah! He's talking about things I've read in the last few years in order to make *Simón* [*Simón del desierto, Simon of the Desert*]. Anyway, I've always liked reading the lives of the saints, the Christian Year, even though all those saints' lives are pretty much alike."

"Did you have a spiritual director?"

"No. One of my mother's uncles was a priest, Uncle Santos. He was my Latin teacher, and that helped me a lot, later on, when I studied literature. He was my father's administrator in Calanda."

"You've already told me that you didn't read Lautréamont"—whose violent, hallucinogenic poetry was important to the surrealists—"until 1929, but do you think man himself is responsible for good and evil?"

"I've already told you that the god created by man is the spirit of evil."

"Were you affected by the idea of death from a young age?"

"Yes."

"What was your first image of death?"

"Putrefaction. I was eight, in Calanda. I was taking a walk with my father. We saw a dead mule. A *carnero,* 'dead meat,' as they call dead animals there."

"Does it have anything to do with the rotting donkeys in *Un Chien andalou* [*Un Chien Andalou/An Andalusian Dog*]?"

"Of course."

"They say it's Dalí's idea."

"Absolutely not. It's my idea. I'd had it in mind since 1923. And, besides that, the bells. The bells of Calanda. They toll all day long. Who's dying? Bells, bells for mass, for the rosary, for someone dying. I used to go to the cemetery a lot, to see the bones. There's a lot of that in *El ángel exterminador* [*The Exterminating Angel*]. The *carneros*. A constant image of death and the sense of sin. Imagine how that sense of sin affected me! But I can't help it. I can't separate the two: for me—instinctively—coitus is something evil."

* * *

"Your father had a great feeling for art, didn't he?"

"My father paid for one of the floats in the procession to celebrate the Miracle, in

Calanda. It was beautiful, done in the best Sulpician style, with two life-sized angels, the Virgin and Pellicer. The estate workers, all dressed in white with red sashes, carried it. The 'red hordes' destroyed it in 1936. It's a shame."[9]

"You could take care of that." He doesn't hear me.

"I owe my love of fire arms to my father. I've told you that in Havana he sold everything for ships. He also sold arms. Apparently, he sold a lot of them, and Smith and Wesson, every once in awhile, would give him, say, a revolver, with a mother-of-pearl handle and his initials engraved on it. When I was sick, my father would come to my room to see me, and sometimes he would lend, or give, me one of them. I was a kid. Later when my father died, I had a sense of freedom, and I drank down two cognacs."

* * *

"Let's talk a little about your father's death. Where were you?"

"It was at the end of April, in 1923. My father died on May third. I had gone to the Central University [in Madrid]. I was taking my exams at a different time from the other students. The exams were in June, and the enrollment period ended around April 30th. I went to sign up. I was waiting in line in front of the registration window…."

"You were with Chabás, weren't you?"[10]

"Chabás was there too. He had finished his degree. I don't know why he was there. He was going to take exams in some other subject, probably advanced Latin. I'm not sure what. I had gotten a telegram from my father that morning. No. that's not right. I think I signed up and then went to the Residencia, and when I got there, I found a telegram saying that my father was very sick, that I should go to Saragossa right away. I left that afternoon. I took the express train….

"When I got to Saragossa my father was, not in a coma yet, but in very bad shape. He was in and out of consciousness. He lived for two more days. I remember that in his lucid moments, he'd say, 'I'm going away forever. Take care of your mother. Be good to her,' and so on. Then he'd lose consciousness. It made a big impression on me. I loved my father although there was a certain rivalry between us, especially when I was eighteen or nineteen. But by then I had realized that I loved him, that I valued him. At that point, I started drinking to…. I was nervous and all that so I started drinking cognac, for the two days that he lasted, until he died and then until we buried him. I was drinking a good bit, I don't know, I must have drunk a total of two bottles of cognac in two days or something like that. And he died the day after I got there. I had to put the shroud on him. I took care of him that night, because my mother didn't show up. She was in bed. My sisters didn't show up either. I spent all night waking him. He had a crucifix on his chest, and I watched him breath. I told myself, 'This is a hallucination.' But I saw the crucifix rise and fall very clearly. The next day, around eleven in the morning—he had died the night before—we buried him.

"That day we sent a telegram to a cousin of mine in Barcelona, Dr. Amorós. He was a professor of numismatics at the University of Barcelona. He had married a first cousin of mine. I had to wait for him at the station at two in the morning. It was May. The balcony was open. It was warm, and I was in an armchair—this must have been about eleven o'clock—nodding off a little, nodding off to try to get some sleep before going to the station. And then I heard, in the dining room, which was the next room, the sound of chairs, like someone making his way hurriedly between lots and lots of chairs. And I was startled.

'Who's there?' And suddenly my father appeared in the door of the dining room, looking at me aggressively, with his eyes popping and his hands like claws, reaching for my face. I was scared to death. I got up and went to the living room, where they had put a mattress—because the house was full of people—where the gardener and a driver who'd come from the village could sleep. Two employees, two peasants, you know. And I told them, 'I've just had a hallucination. I just saw my father. I know it's the cognac, and the state I'm in, but I'm scared.' And I lay down on the mattress between the two of them. Later on, around two o'clock, they took me to the station. I picked up my cousin Pepe Amorós. We went back home.

"He went to bed, and I went to bed in the room next to the one where my father had died. It must have been around three in the morning. He came back. The door opens, and I hear a noise. The door opens, and there's my father again, and he's still aggressive. He threw himself at me. I screamed, and everybody came to my room. 'What's going on?' And I said, 'Another hallucination. Go on, leave me alone.' I fell asleep. The next day, I was upset because I'd been afraid of that apparition. Then I decided to sleep in the same bed where my father had died. And that night I did just that…. It was absurd. I took a revolver I had that was one of my father's, a really nice Smith that had his initials engraved in the mother-of-pearl on the butt of the gun. And I slept with the revolver under my pillow. I said to myself: 'If the apparition comes back, I'll take a shot at it, and then we'll see what happens to the apparition.' I felt confident. Nobody appeared. Everything was normal, and it still is. Firearms make me feel confident."

"And what about that story of putting on your father's shoes?"—Buñuel laughs—"Was your father buried, or was he still lying in state?"

"No, no. Five days later, or maybe it was three, I was supposed to meet Sánchez Ventura[11] and Mantecón in a café, in the Café Moderno—you've been there—on the Calle de Alfonso y Coso. I had already gone through all my father's things, his boxes of cigars, two or three guns. In short, I was sort of beginning to feel like the head of the family, because I was the oldest brother. And I started using my father's stuff, smoking his cigars, to…. Among his clothes, for example, he had a wonderful panama hat, a hat he'd brought from Havana. It must have cost four or five thousand pesetas. It was wonderful, as fine as a spider's web. And I put it on too. I went out one day with the hat. My father's head was a little bigger than mine, so I folded some newspaper inside it, and I went out with the hat on. And then I saw the boots. They were boots with two elastic pieces on each side. I put them on and went out, and Sánchez Ventura and Mantecón saw me the day we met up at the Moderno. I put on the boots just, I don't know, to feel like my father, the head of the family, because I liked that feeling, because I'd never had boots with elastic like those. I went out in them, and later I went back to my own shoes."

"Why did you do it? To show your brothers and sisters who was who?"

"No, they already knew that. I was the substitute. I was my father. The substitute from the instant I put them on, because I put them on without even realizing what I was doing. I didn't do it for any special reason. It was just the freedom of being in charge."

"The proof is that you took off right away."

"I went to Madrid to take my exams. I left right away. Ten days after my father died, I went back to Madrid to take my exams. The professor from Aragón failed me. What was his name? Ballesteros…. Antonio Ballesteros Bereta, wasn't it? Something like that."

"Yes. In history?"

"Yes. I was in the artillery when I went to take my exams. I took them when I was a gunner. [He was stationed in Madrid and spent most nights at the Residencia.]

"Turn it off."

The recorder is turned off and then back on at some point.

"You talked to me one time about your feeling of freedom and at the same time of sorrow?"

"Yes. Absolutely. Seeing my father dead, I had a terrible feeling of sadness; I was very emotional and also almost crazy from all the drinking, and at the same time, I had a feeling, I don't know, almost a feeling of happiness. It was a mixture of emotions, a terrible conflict. I was fighting against my own feelings. I told myself: 'I mustn't feel all this, because I love him, I should just be sad and nothing else.' But, no, at the same time, I felt free."

"But was that the first time you'd ever drunk so much?"

"No, no. I had already drunk a lot before that."

"Oh?"

"I started to drink with the Federicos and the Pepines in Madrid, when I was twenty-two. Well, to drink a lot of Valdepeñas with my friends [Federico García Lorca, Pepín Bello and others] and maybe a cognac."

* * *

"Is the idea of death important to you?"

"Yes. Like all Spaniards in villages, I spent my childhood and part of my youth bound to the notion of death. The bells were what divided up and ordered our days. We knew what time it was and what we had to do according to the church bells. The church was, and still is, what ordered our days and our nights, and, of course, announced a death. The deaths were a terrible series of peals. And there were rings for the masses, and vespers and rosaries…. Yesterday, I was talking to a young woman from Seville. She was very funny; she told me that, after the war, there were a lot of long silences and flagellation with whips that had knots and pointed ends. Sometimes, in secondary school, instead of putting the cilices we wore on our thighs with the barbs inside we wore them the other way around so that the clowns who laid a heavy hand on us—'inadvertently'—to say 'How are you?' got stabbed. This kind of thing went on until the fifties. In Seville, they still sell the things.

"Your relationship with the Church surely isn't just about your education with the Jesuits. Like all good Spanish families, you must have a few nuns or maybe priests among your relatives."

"Lots of them. Nuns, I can't keep track of them. Priests, apart from the administrator that we had in Calanda who was a distant uncle—I already told you about him—the one who taught me Latin, there was Manuel Pérez, an uncle on my father's side, who was a canon, a fine man who never got any farther in his career because the bishop took against him. He was from Fos, a beautiful village two and a half kilometers from Calanda. A great uncle on my mother's side was bishop of Pamplona."

"You're well served, but that's the norm for families in the Spanish bourgeoisie. Don't you remember that story somebody told me—I don't remember who—about the crucifix that they threw into the Guadalupe River and that wound up in Alcañiza?"

"No. What I did tell you one time is the story about Castelserás. In Calanda we called

the people from Castelserás 'dirty, little Jews.' Castelserás is a beautiful village, like all of those in that part of Aragón, except for Calanda, which is horrible."

"No, it's not."

"Yes, it is. Well, one time during a drought—it must have been about seventy years ago—the people from Castelserás saw some clouds on the horizon so they formed a procession with the figure of the Virgin in order to pray for rain, and when they were crossing the bridge where you enter the little town, all hell broke loose, and it started to hail like crazy, and the hail flattened their pathetic crops. Well, as soon as the storm passed, they tossed that Virgin into the river, which had risen with the rain."

"That gives a good idea of what they were like in the village. Where is Castelserás?"

"About five kilometers from Calanda and about ten from Alcañiz."

"Have your childhood and adolescence had an influence on your films?"

"Obviously, memories of my childhood and my youth always come out in my films, or at least they're the basis for a lot of them. For example, the bit about the drug don Lope makes Viridiana take.[12] All that comes from a dream I had in my youth. I was in love with Queen Victoria Eugenia, like most of the kids my age; she was blonde, foreign and beautiful. I had the idea—before falling asleep, or half-asleep or sound asleep, who knows?—of giving her a sleeping potion, and then (the king, of course, wasn't around) going to bed with her. It was totally impossible: I was a bourgeois kid and she was the queen. I mean, it would never, never happen, but I thought of a thousand tricks for somehow getting into the palace, and into the queen's bedroom. In *Viridiana*, it's the same story, but the other way around. I'm don Lope [*sic*], and the girl is young. I mean, there's a different problem, a different reason for distance, and she's a nun. I accumulate every possible obstacle between them. Don Lope gives Viridiana the sleeping potion, but at the very moment when he can go to bed with her, he backs off. I must have done the same thing in my dreams about the queen. There is a great distance between them. At the point when don Lope commits suicide the movie was over for me. I'm telling you all this so you can see how I work and how my films come together. In *Viridiana* there are two totally different films. I just told you that with the death of the old man the film was done for me. But, after that, what does Viridiana do? Does she take in prostitutes? That's trite; it's been done to death. Take in beggars? I picked that option. And that's how the film started working out. Everything began to come together little by little. That bit about putting the shoes on the dead man…."

"You remembered your father's death and when you put his shoes on him."

"Yes. I dressed him, with the help of my sister María's nursemaid, and I tried to put his shoes on him—those shoes with the elastic insets—but they didn't fit. So I took a pair of scissors and cut the elastic, and then I pulled his pants over them so nobody would notice. But it stayed in my memory."

"I can tell."

* * *

"First of all: I want to avoid being clever, or being moralistic, or, if possible, doing what's expected, and to recognize the importance of chance, of the fundamental role that it has in our lives. That's why in *Tristana* she always chooses. The character always chooses (between two chickpeas, for example). That's also a memory from childhood: my sister Margarita choosing between two bread crumbs. 'Which one do you like best?' 'It doesn't

matter.' 'It does. Look closely.' And she was right. Ten minutes passed, and she could distinguish between them and choose: 'This one.' A little later, she would take a closer look and repeat again, 'Yes, this one.'"

"You may not like your village as a village, but you can't deny that you love it."

"Calanda…. Two or three years ago some kids from the University of Saragossa came to see me. Three boys and two girls and a nut who stationed himself at the door of my house. I was surprised to see the mayor there and the corporal for the *Guardia Civil*. And the nut yelling: 'Mao is going to send us arms! There's going to be a big uprising! And Comrade Buñuel is with us!' They arrested him, of course. The mayor protested, "Señor Buñuel is well respected here.' That's when they wanted to name a street after me—I've already told you about it—but forty neighbors refused to sign the petition. And the governor of Teruel wrote the mayor, 'Forget the street for now. Anyway, señor Buñuel is Mexican.' And now, it turns out that have put the Calle de don Luis Buñuel on an alley that's next to the church, near our house, one we used to called 'Shit Alley,' because there were always three or four big turds in the middle of it. It's odd how they draw your attention, even if you don't want to, you always look. Now things have changed a lot. In much more important streets, it's not unusual to see a drunk shitting, or an alley where a civil guard is peeing and zipping up his fly. 'Shit Alley' now converted into the 'Calle de don Luis Buñuel'! And, of course, since it was the Falangist City Government that did it, when things change, they'll shoot me."

"It won't come to that. They'll limit themselves to calling it the 'Calle de *L'Âge d'or*."

"Right. It was the only village where free love was officially proclaimed. With a band and a trumpet blast: 'By order of the Committee, from today on within the boundaries of Calanda, this is the first year of free love….' Imagine! The first one who laid hands on a woman! He'd be royally fucked! To the Tower!"[13]

He's rather pleased with the idea.

"How about women? How did you get along with them?"

"I never said anything to Pilar Bayona. I've always been timid with women. One time we were left on our own out on my balcony. It was during the festivals of the Virgin of Pilar. I was looking at her. I'm sure she realized, but I didn't say anything. I never told her anything. It was a real *coup de foudre*. I saw her in Saragossa coming out of the movies, or out of the Conservatory"—she was already a concert pianist at fifteen—"I asked who she was. She wasn't much older than I, maybe a year."

* * *

"Do you remember Ferrer?"[14]

"I do remember Ferrer."

"They arrested his family on 20 August 1909, and they deported them to Alcañiz."

"I didn't know that."

"You almost got them in Calanda."

"I heard talk about them, that's all. They were anarchists, people who didn't live proper lives, who didn't believe in God. Somebody who came in from Barcelona told terrible stories."

"And the 1917 strike?"

"I knew nothing about it."

"And the business in '23?"[15]

"That was different. I had already finished my military service. I was probably in San Sebastián at the time. We spent all our summers in San Sebastián. I've always kept a little distance from the catastrophes."

"Right. We've already said that you smell them."

"I got to Madrid the day that they killed Dato. I took a taxi from the station and talked to the driver about it when we were passing the Puerta de Alcalá. I remember it clearly: 'Hey, that's great. That's one down.' 'Right. One scoundrel less.' Back then, we were more or less anarchists. When the Canalejas thing happened, I was in Saragossa. I was okay with that too. You already know that I didn't go, that I organized things so as not to go, to the war in Morocco. By the time the Gurugú business happened, I was free from the army."[16]

"What did you think of Primo de Rivera's uprising?"

"It was pretty upsetting. My sympathies were with the workers' unions then. It really bothered me. I was in San Sebastián when it happened."

"And I was in Saragossa. I saw them proclaim the state of war. It was gut-wrenching. But you were a young toff, and you didn't do anything."

"Neither did you."

"Changing the subject: did your mother see your films?"

"No, not a single one."

"I completely forgot to ask you. What influence did the European war, the first one, have on you?"

"I was fourteen."

"But you were a good eighteen when it ended, and that's old enough to notice."

"No effect at all. Oh, I remember the arguments between the pro–Allies and the pro–German camps, but I can't say it had any effect on me that I can remember."

"With me it was the other way around. That's no surprise, because, even though I was younger when it happened, I was born in France, and my father was German. The French tendency to see everything in black and white hurt me terribly until I passed, we passed, the frontier to Spain. I was eleven, and I remember a lot of things from that time as though it were yesterday. I don't mean memories like the ones about school, or your friends or your family. No, I mean brutal, crisp images without any blurring. The village where we spent our holiday that summer, the station—in the middle of France—where I saw up close for the first time a train of wounded soldiers. The hotel in Barcelona, the Ramblas, Valencia…."

"I had absolutely no interest in all that. I knew there was a war, but I didn't think about it. I didn't even read the newspapers, to the great consternation of my father. 'How can it be? How can it be that a kid your age doesn't care what goes on in the world? Let's see. Who's the president of the Council, here, in Spain?' 'I don't know, and I don't care.' 'That's shameful!' My father was right, of course. But I could have cared less. The war meant nothing, zero, to me."

"How about the workers' uprising?"

"The socialist one?"

"Yes. The one in 1917."

"I don't remember that it made much of an impression on me."

"It did on me. I can still see the Civil Guard mounted on horseback on the Calle de Barcas."

"That I do remember. The Paseo de la Independencia [in Saragossa] covered with sand. It must have been before 1917. Carts came again and again so they could throw shovelfuls of sand on the pavement. Then the warning calls, the trumpets. At the first one, the two or three thousand workers stayed in the middle of the paseo. At the second and the third, they took off running! I was up on the balcony, watching. It was easy to run down the side streets."

"But didn't you have any political ideas?"

"No. I don't even think I have them today. I'm on the side of the poor, of course. I'm against society as it's organized, of course…. But what interested us then were girls and the women who weren't girls anymore."

"And insects."

"Yes, if you say so. Back then, I just had hopes of hearing Beethoven's *Ninth,* and I'd lick my lips waiting for the day when the Madrid Orchestra would come to town. Records didn't last long in those days, and I listened to Schumann all the time, as if it were *La verbena de la paloma* or *Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente.*[17] I took the score with me to the theater, just as I did later at the Teatro Real to hear Wagner."

"It's one of the things I just don't get, your taste for Wagner."

"Until I became deaf."

"It amazes me."

"…And Brahms and Strauss."

"I agree about Brahms, but Strauss…. Now that we've taken a step back, tell me something about Pilar Bayona. She must have been a good bit older than you."

"No. She would have been just a year or so older. She must be about seventy now. She was the daughter of don Julio, an assistant professor of math at the high school. I was probably about fifteen. I was head over heels in love with her for a year or two. Once I followed don Julio home; I got to his house and heard someone inside playing the piano wonderfully. I never told her I loved her. Another time, a year or so later, we were by ourselves, out on a balcony—it was during the festival of Saragossa's patron saint. We stayed out there watching the procession. I'm sure she knew I loved her, but we never said anything."

"I missed one of your girlfriends by just a few months. One who was here in Mexico for a long, long time, working in a pharmacy by the Puente de Alvarado."

"Oh, right! Conchita Martínez Conde. The one who married Galarza."

"Yes. Galarza's widow. Where did you meet her?"

"In Santander, in Vega de Pas. Her family was well off. They had dairies. That's why she used to go to the mountains. I declared my love for her, as we did back then, at the end of the summer. I said, 'Señorita, I want to tell you something' and so on and so forth. She became my girlfriend, and we saw each other after that in Madrid. I was seventeen. And then she comes and tells me she's talked to her mother, and her mother thinks it's fine, but we'd have to formalize the relationship, and it would be good if my father sent a letter to her parents. Imagine! If I wrote something like that to my father, when I was seventeen, the beating I'd get, you can picture it! The thing is: in the village, they thought we were rich, much richer than we were. And that was the end of that."

"And after you finished school?"

"I planned to be an agronomist."

"An engineer?"

"Oh, no! That would have been too much! Back then, the hardest thing to do, what

really made somebody stand out, was to be a civil engineer—designing roads and canals and ports—or to be an agricultural engineer. That was way too important! What I liked most then, what I still like and what still seems like an amazing mystery to me, is insects. I can watch a fly for I don't know how long. And a beetle! I could spend hours looking at a beetle. I don't understand it. All the mystery of life is there. It's beyond comprehension. Beyond anything we know."

"How many brothers and sisters did you have?"

"There were seven of us. I was the oldest."

"Do you remember your house?"

"Of course. My sister Conchita took a great photograph of it. They reproduced it in *Positif.* I'll look for it."

"Your romance [with Conchita Martínez Conde], was it a don Juan kind of thing or was it serious?"

"I'm no good as a don Juan. The truth is, we were in love. We kissed a lot and went out together, out to breakfast, out to dinner. She told me everything. I know her life from top to bottom. I know all her stories. We were really in love. But she's a cold woman. The first time we were alone together was in the metro, shoved up against each other, because the car was full. And we kissed and kissed…. That lasted about two years. One time she was sitting on my knees; we were at home alone. And nothing happened."

"I already know. She told you she had her period."

"Who told you?"

"You did. Who else? And later you'll go around telling people I'm acting like a detective."

"There you have it. I must have told her something like 'It's better this way.' But, no, I'll say it again: I'm no good as a don Juan."

"That's why you liked, you like, whores so much."

"Maybe."

* * *

[Aub announces,] "An unpublished poem by Federico García Lorca read by Luis Buñuel." [Buñuel is evidently reading from a manuscript, since he has some trouble making out the writing. Later he tells Muñoz Suay that the poem is on the back of the well-known photograph of him and Lorca taken at the fair and that he has several of Lorca's unpublished poems (see Muñoz Suay's diary entry for 17 September 1969).]

"It's in the *Verbena de San Antonio de la Florida,* in 1924. I think it must have been in June. 'The first fair God sends us every year is *San Antonio de la Florida.*'"

Luis, in the sweetness of the early morning
My friendship in full flower sings,
The full moon shines and ambles
Through the high, calm clouds.

Buñuel laughs.

My heart shines and wanders
In the yellow-green night.
Luis, my passionate friendship
Weaves back and forth through the breeze.

"Typical Federico."

The child plays his little piano, sadly
Without … a smile.

"I'm not sure. Yes, that's it."

Under the paper festoons,

"Here's the best part":

I shake my good friend's hand.

He reads it over again, more confidently this time.

"Read this other one to me, from the same book."

"From *Libro de poemas* (*Book of Poems*) especially dedicated 'To my dearest Luis Buñuel. (An affadavit of eternal friendship). F.'"[18]

A Lanscape without a Song
Blue sky,
Yellow field,
Blue hill,
Yellow field,
An olive tree passes
Through the deserted flatland
A single
Olive tree.
[Madrid, 1923]

…

[They are evidently going through a folder, or perhaps a scrapbook, of material Buñuel collected in his years at the Residencia. They comment on different photos, other writers, but especially on the manuscript copies Luis has of some of Federico's poems.][19]

"I said, 'This is really bad,' and, bam, Federico goes off furious: 'Good-bye, gentlemen.' I hung on to it. The problem is: it has the stench of poetry. 'Poetic Nocturnes,' 'Nighttime Skies through the Window,' 'Fountains.'"

…

"Under his influence, you almost became a poet … and an actor in the theater."

"You're wrong. 'Under the influence of his close friend Federico García Lorca, Buñuel enters the world of poetry, of which he had been totally ignorant.' That's it. Apart from that, zero."

"So it's not true that you got interested in the theater at one point."

"No, not at all. Zero."

"Especially in marionettes. You acted in the Residencia."

"Yes, there's a photo or so of me with Federico."

"And in 1925, in Amsterdam, you directed the world premiere of Manuel de Falla's *El retablo de Maese Pedro* [*Master Peter's Puppet Show*]."

"Yes. It's true. With Willem Mengelberg."

"With Mengelberg?"

"He was a great conductor."

"How did that happen?"

"Ricardo Viñes came. The pianist. He was a friend of Mengelberg. There were two famous theaters in Amsterdam that were dedicated to symphonic music. In one of them he presented *Histoire du soldat* [*The Soldier's Tale*] by Stravinsky. It was a huge success, and he wanted to premiere something equally good at the other theater. He asked Ricardo Viñes to stage *El retablo de Maese Pedro.* Ricardo asked his nephew Hernando which Spaniards were living in Amsterdam or Paris, and we went and put on the *Retablo* without really giving it much importance. Eight actors and the marionettes. With Manuel Ángles Ortiz, Hernando Viñes…. Who made the marionettes? Ismael…. I don't remember his name. The actors were my cousin Saúl, who played the part of Don Quixote. Cossío played Sancho. Peinado was the miller, etc. etc.[20] We did it in Amsterdam without knowing a word of Dutch. And I was the stage director. I still can't believe we did it. It cost, I think, two-hundred florins. There were three showings. Since I didn't know anything about theater, once the first performance had ended and the audience had gone, I went down to the stalls to see what the lighting was like. The actors were still up on the stage. I realized then that from down below you couldn't see anything. We fixed it for the second and third showings. They adjusted the reflectors, the amber light, I don't know what all."

"And that foray, it was from Paris to Amsterdam?"

"Yes, from Paris to Amsterdam."

"Did it happen as soon as you got to Paris?"

"What?"

"As soon as you got to Paris?"

"In the first year, less than a year."

"If it was in '25, it wasn't even a year."

"1925. Around then. I got to Paris in January of '25."

"And the performance must have been in October."

"It would have been October or November. I have the clippings upstairs."

"Do you?"

"Yes. Along with the photographs of the *Retablo*."

"So, in Paris, in early 1925, you aren't filling the position that…."

"I wasn't filling any position. At the beginning of 1925, thanks to the Residencia de Estudiantes and a recommendation of Azcárete [a diplomat with the League of Nations] I went to Paris to work as part of the International Institute on Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations, but the League of Nations didn't have any money. France, which should have been paying, didn't have any money either. And in that period of two years when I was 'learning' about international politics and so on, I devoted myself to film."

"And you met Breton."

"Breton worked six or seven hours a day when he was drawing up someone's horoscope, more if it was a friend's. He knew a lot about that kind of thing. He drew up a horoscope for me that was a hundred and eight pages long. I lost those pages during the Spanish War. A lot of my papers disappeared. Breton told me that I would die on a distant shore, or because of taking the wrong medication—instead of taking a purgative, I took arsenic, or something like that."

"That was Breton?"

"Yes, Breton. The horoscope almost came true, because when I was in Los Angeles, I

wanted to go to the South Seas. They had always fascinated me…. But Denise Tual—I knew her from Paris—talked me into going to Mexico."[21]

"You have an acting career. You've appeared in a lot of your own films and in a few by other people. You've always liked playing a priest."

"It must be because disguises really suit me. You know I love wearing a disguise. Just now, in Spain, in one of Saura's films, I played an executioner. I garroted seven men. Pepe Bergamín was still in Madrid, and he and Aleixandre were going to play hostages. The assistant director came in trembling with fear, saying No way. But I *did* play the executioner, in the plaza of Colmenar Viejo; we didn't let the others know."[22]

"You also appeared in *Un Chien andalou*."

"But my debut was with—hold your breath—Raquel Meller in the *Carmen* that Feyder made in 1923.[23] They made Peinado technical adviser or something to that effect. He rushed into La Rotonde and took the whole group of Spaniards with him. What I don't remember is whether it was on a set or at the Medrano Circus."

"That was a time when you made lots of new friends and learned loads of new things, wasn't it?"

"I met Dámaso a little later. He had just translated Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man;* the Biblioteca had published it for him, and he was dead scared."[24]

"Why?"

"In case his mother found out. He was terrified of her. 'If she finds out, she'll kill me.'"

"But why?"

"She was very strict."

"But, did she know anything about Joyce?"

"I asked him the same thing. 'If she finds the manuscript at home, it would be just like her to read it,' he told me."

"If it had been *Ulysses*…."

"No. It was *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* And he signed the translation with a pseudonym. Not Amado Alonso, but something like it. Dead scared. Now, that was something else."

"Now that story really is a novel. Tell me something about Paris then."

"I got to Paris in 1925. I spent my time with Hernando Viñes, who was such a Catholic, and with Peinado and with other Spanish painters, and we drank a lot of wine. Three or four girls who were studying rhythmic gymnastics nearby dropped in at Viñes's studio. Jeanne's father was an expert accountant, monsieur Rucar.[25] We always got along. But I had an idea buzzing at the back of my head: I wanted to give them a sleeping potion, so we could take advantage of them. Viñes protested; he was scandalized."

"It's the origin of a scene in *Viridiana*."

"Maybe. We ran around from tavern to tavern or from cabaret to cabaret with Juan Vicens.[26] Juanito, an only son, had a lot of money. My mother sent me all the money I wanted. We lived like Turks, as the French say. We would go to some bistro, the kind that has all the bottles in a row, and we'd start with the first and end up around the twentieth. Then we had the idea of setting up a cabaret. Vicens already had the money, and I went to Saragossa to talk to my mother, but she didn't want to know. Then I also started going to Madame Epstein's school with Uzelay. Except for the two of us, everybody else was a white Russian. I started saying that I'd be interested in making films, and, since Epstein was part

of the group and the school, he took me on as his assistant in *Mauprat* [*Mauprat*]. The truth is that I didn't really have anything to do in *Mauprat,* and I signed on as second assistant to Mario Nalpas and Henri Etievant in *La sirène des tropiques* [*The Siren of the Tropics*,] whose star was *cette salope* [that whore] Josephine Baker.[27] I didn't really have anything to do in that one either, but there I was. It was the same year as Sacco and Vanzetti."

"Sometimes I think you're not a surrealist at all."

"I'm more of a surrealist than ever. The only literature, the only poetry I like is surrealist. The only painting I like is surrealist too. When I got to Paris, I wasn't a surrealist. I thought it was something queers got up to. I read their things for a laugh, just like years before when I read *Ultra* to amuse myself while I was riding the streetcar in Madrid. And the same thing happened.[28] I wound up becoming part of the movement. The truth is, I wasn't part of the surrealist group until 1929 or '30, from *Un Chien andalou* up until the time Aragon came back from his trip to Russia. Then the arguments began, and they started forcing people out of the group. I sided with Aragon and a few others. Yet when I close my eyes, I'm a nihilist. A total nihilist, without the least reservation. But when I open them, I realize the impossibility of the thing…."

"Like the good bourgeois you are."

"If you say so."

"You didn't sign any of the surrealist manifestos, except maybe one or two. But Dalí, on the other hand, signed almost all of them."

"No, Dalí didn't. The foreigners only signed the most anodyne documents or the ones that dealt strictly with questions of art. When it was something serious, like shitting on the family or the homeland or the flag, only the French signed. They were very careful about those things. How about a whiskey?"

"Okay, with tap water, half and half."

"I'm still faithful to the martini, to my own version, with a dash of Campari."

We drink.

"But I was wrong. There was nothing queer about surrealism, on the contrary. Breton hated them. Nobody in the group was queer. Well, 'nobody' is going too far. Crevel was, but he did all he could to get over it. He even tried to have a girlfriend. I was the one who introduced Dalí to the group, a few months later. I had already shown them photographs of his painting, but they weren't very interested. Well, somewhat, they were somewhat interested. But the next summer Paul Éluard, Gala, Magritte and someone else who later became a dealer in surrealist paintings, all went to Cadaqués.[29] It was Dalí who told me, 'I'm going to introduce you to the most amazing woman you've ever met.'"

"By the way, Luis, what are you going to tell me about Dalí? How do you want him to come out in the book? Are we going to tell all the truth about him?"

"We'll tell the plain truth: what he did. How we wrote *Un Chien andalou.* His part of *L'Âge d'or* is very small,[30] because he was already under the influence of Gala, the woman I hate most in all the world. The truth is, I'd love it if we insulted him. When I go to Madrid, or they give me some prize, he sends a telegram: 'You've got to come to Cadaqués,' 'Now we'll really do fabulous things,' 'I send you a kiss on the lips.' Or in Venice, where he sends them in Italian. Or Paris, where he sends them in French. One time, when things looked bad—he was saying that if I didn't go to Cadaqués, he'd show up in Madrid—I answered very calmly, 'It's water under the bridge now. It's over.' Believe me: I wouldn't mind seeing

him face to face now, to repeat what I've already told him plus a few other painful truths I haven't told him yet. And afterward, we'd probably have a few drinks together. He's a son of a bitch; he's responsible for their throwing me out on the street in New York [see 269-70*n*106]. But for a long time, from our twenties up to our thirties, he was my best friend. We were close friends, really close friends."

"And that's important."

"Yes, if you're sentimental like I am. But without Gala. I never want to lay eyes on that woman again. I've never known anybody nastier. She just destroyed him. But let's not make too much of it. I went from Paris to Cadaqués. I was going to make Ramón's film, using the money my mother had given me.[31] Dalí and I talked about this, and in six days we'd written the script for *Un Chien andalou.* He had no part in the filming. He came to Paris on the last day with his mother and his aunt. The only thing he did was put the donkeys on the pianos and the tar around their eyes. In *L'Âge d'or* he didn't do anything. That's why he signed the surrealists' manifesto about the film and I didn't. How could I sign something in favor of a work I had done myself!"

"I've translated it, because it's an important document for your 'career in cinema.'"

"Well, it's a document that's hard to find."

"Not at all. It's in Nadeau's *Histoire du suréalisme* [*History of Surrealism*]."

* * *

"Yes, I went to the movies a lot. We went in Madrid, and I kept on going in Paris. Of course, we went to feel up our girlfriends. It was the only place you could. Because, otherwise, you couldn't get near them. Not even to hold hands. It would have been a scandal! The movie theaters were different. On top of that, we loved the comedies, the American comedians: Ben Turpin, Fatty [Arbuckle], the Keystone Bathing Beauties, Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, Harry Langdon. We were crazy about all that and also about the westerns."

"Everybody was. And Max Linder, and *La Main-qui-etreint* [The hand that strangles], and *The Exploits of Elaine*.[32] What I want to know is when you decided to go into film, what led you to that decision?"

"I've told the story many times. It was in Paris, at the Vieux-Colombier, seeing *Destiny* (*Der Müde Tod*) by Fritz Lang. It was bad, with three love stories. But it was a film with no inter-titles."[33]

"It wasn't that bad. For me, Lang's bad work—if he has any, and who doesn't?—is what he did in America, but the films he made in Germany are interesting. *Destiny,* the same as *M., Dr. Mabuse, The Nibelungs* (*Die Nibelungen*), *Metropolis.* I'm sure of what interested you in *Destiny,* and it wasn't the [expressionistic] sets … which must have bothered you, but…."

"The wall. The presence of death. Those dead lovers."

"Right, the wall of death. It's odd to think your interest in film was born of German expressionism. In the end, your best work was also made under the influence of death and destiny. In *Destiny,* the two are opposed. There's a moment when death, tired of its constant triumph, agrees to let its victim escape, provided that the girl passes various tests. But, of course, destiny, which is always vigilant in the expressionist metaphysics, prevents the triumph of man over death. Still it's interesting that a work of that type, diametrically opposed to surrealism, could inspire you with the idea of becoming a filmmaker."

"Not exactly. I've already told you I thought the film was bad. What affected me was precisely that wall, that struggle. It convinced me that film could be a form of art. For the first time, I felt a sort of shudder, a romantic feeling, and the sense that I could make my way of seeing things touch other people. And remember, the mechanics of cinema works beautifully with surrealism. That presence of death arriving in an eighteenth-century coach or something along those lines. That intrusion of death made a huge impression on me."

"And then?"

"Very simple: I went to a school. To Jean Epstein's. I went with Regoyos"—another Spanish painter—"and Uzelay."

"What memories! Uzelay in Bilbao. I had a drawing of Uzelay's, a cubist drawing, one of the few he did, in my house in Valencia. I'd like to know where it is now."

"Uff. It's better not to think about those things. A month later, I told Epstein: 'I want to work on the set even if I'm sweeping the floors.' And that's how it started."

"The interesting thing is you must have worked with him, at that time, on films like *Six et demi, onze* [Six and a half by eleven]."

"Yes, and *La Chute de la maison Usher* [*The Fall of the House of Usher*]."

"Making that film is when the famous incident that broke up your relationship happened. It's hard to believe the stories about it."

"Well, it's true. He told me that the next day I had to work with Abel Gance, and I said No, I was there to work with him and not with somebody I thought was a bad director. He was furious, 'Comment un petit con comme vous ose parler ainsi d'un si grand metteur en scène!' [How can a little shit like you dare to talk like that about a great director!]. Despite all that, he did offer to drop me off in Paris, because we were working in Épinal."

"It's interesting too that Epstein's esthetic, even when he was making pot-boilers—maybe especially in the pot-boilers—showed quite a lot of influence of German expressionism."

"What was beginning to interest me then, more and more, was surrealism, especially the work of Benjamin Péret. I didn't know him until I met him here. As a person, he never interested me, but his poems made a big impression. Later on, when I was making *Un Chien andalou* I kept thinking about his poems."[34]

"That doesn't surprise me. He still hasn't gotten the recognition he will have some day. In poetry, few writers have achieved his level of—purely mental—violence. It's a poetry of shock and of collisions. And after that, what did you do?"

"Well, Goya's centenary came, in 1927. A committee was formed in Saragossa, and they planned to make a film. They chose me to direct it. Valle-Inclán also wanted to be involved. The government of Aragón was going to pay for it. It's a good thing they didn't come up with the money and nothing happened. Imagine what it would have been like! Do you want a whiskey?"[35]

"Okay."

"What you've said about expressionism is interesting, because when I was with Epstein I also met Lupu Pick [the Romanian director]. He wasn't what he had been. It's odd that there are some directors who are only good when they are the writer. I'm the opposite. I need a writer, obviously, because I'm not only a bad writer, I'm very, very slow. Everything that comes directly from my hands bothers me, even my handwriting. Of course, there's

the typewriter, but I take hours and hours. What you'd do in half an hour would take me three. On the other hand, working with gadgets is something I really like."

"Let's go back to your career in cinema. Everybody knows it started when your mother gave you money to make a film."

"Right. At the beginning, she was a little reluctant, but the notary convinced her, and she gave me five thousand duros, that is, twenty-five thousand pesetas. I went to Paris, and they gave me the sum according to the exchange rate: one hundred and forty thousand francs. I didn't make the film right away, because I decided to spend part of the money on cabarets and on having fun."

"Did you spend a lot?"

"No, *hombre,* eight or ten thousand francs. I had the idea of making a film that would be like a newspaper, with different sections: the news, the dramas, the court reports, the events. Everything based on texts, 'greguerías' and short stories written by Ramón Gómez de la Serna. I even talked to the second in command at the *ABC*. He was fine with my filming the rotary presses, whatever I wanted. I went back to Paris, and then I went to Cadaqués, to Dalí's house. From 1920 or '21 we'd been great friends, and, of course, we talked about the film.[36] One morning Dalí told me, 'I've had a very strange dream: I had a hole in my hand, and masses of ants were swarming out of it.' 'I had a strange dream too: I dreamed about my mother and the moon and a cloud that crossed the moon, and later I tried to cut one of my mother's eyes, and she backed off.' 'Well, there's our film,' we said, and we got to work. We wrote the script in six days, rejecting all the more or less normal associations, memories, logic. For example, a character picks up a packet of Gitanes and puts it on a low table. And I say, 'Now, instead of a packet, it's a toad.' We threw that out. We didn't want any magic, just the things we liked that didn't have any special meaning, but we liked the images. Of every six, we rejected five. The first came out very easily. The moon, the cloud, the man shaving, sharpening the blade…. That was Dalí's idea; the cyclist too."

"Were you really sick after filming the scene when the eye is cut?"

"I made myself do it. I told myself, 'You've got to do it.' As if I were sacrificing myself for my country."

"Was it a calf's eye, a pig's eye? Was the animal alive?"

"It was the eye of a dead calf. And very badly made up. We put mascara on the eyelashes. It could have been done with a living calf. But in spite of how badly it's done, what follows is so strong the audience doesn't realize. I told you that Dalí came the last day. Then he went back to Figueras. Since I didn't know anything about editing, I had to learn from Marie Epstein.[37] They had just opened Studio 28. They were going to premiere a Man Ray film, thanks to the Viconte de Noailles's sponsorship."[38]

"Had you seen *L'Étoile de mer* [*The Starfish*]?"

"Yes. I didn't like it. I don't like Man Ray as a filmmaker. He's too artistic. As an engraver he's much better."

"We're the only generation—or at least the first—to grow up with film. Young people now grow up with television, which is not the same. Before us, it was serial novels."

"You're right. Because we're the first generation to watch things instead of reading them. There's a big difference. I say it because of the serials. Our parents and our grandparents read *Les Mystères de Paris* [The mysteries of Paris], but we saw *The Exploits of*

Elaine. They read *Rocambole* with steel engravings, we read *Nick Carter* in colored comic strips, in comic books, and especially, we watched *Judex* and *Fantômas,* and *The Black Coin.*"[39]

"How has that affected us? Has it made us see things differently? My grandchildren see the world through television: the commercials, the dramas, the violence, the cartoon shows, all on television. From an outside perspective, there seems to be a perfect continuity: from serial novels to radio, film, television, rockets, space travel. But it was never that smooth. The physics and chemistry and math that our parents studied, and we studied too, don't have any relation to what's taught today."

"I'm an enemy of science and a friend of mystery."

"I know, I know. But it's not going to do you much good. I'm more and more convinced that there's no real relation between them. We were mistaken. We believed that there was a relationship of constant, amazing dependency between the arts and sciences. But it's not so. Maybe between politics, science and bureaucracy. But the arts *don't* 'advance by leaps and bounds'[40] although the odd invention—aspirin, records, the typewriter, the tape recorder—make work easier. The only new art is cinema, and we were born at the same time it was, just by chance. Film, naturally, suckled what it found at hand: theater, magic tricks—sleight of hand—news, whether it was about peace or about war, natural sciences, sentimentality, fairy tales, anything it could cram down its gullet. Until one day, pretty early on, some folks a little older than we were decided that it should put itself at the service of expression—or expressionism—and poetry in the ways they understood those things back in the twenties. And 'art film' appeared.

"Suddenly, under the influence of what was being done in literature around then, two people who were born when cinema was already a reality figured out that a film, just like a pen or a paintbrush, could be a source of emotions fitting to the new style in art, or anti-art, if you prefer. And so we get to *Un Chien andalou.* I already know about Fritz Lang and Ramón Gómez de la Serna. But let's see how you did it, how the two of you worked together. Obviously, you did the typing, since Dalí didn't know how. To what extent did you two reproduce the collaboration between Soupault and Breton in *Les Champs magnétiques* [*The Magnetic Fields*] or, a little before that, between Tzara and Picabia?"[41]

"Well, obviously, those collaborations had no effect at all on the way we wrote *Un Chien.* What I can say without hesitation is that we worked in complete and absolute agreement, without even trying to at first. I've already told you that one morning we told each other our dreams, and that I decided those dreams—and not Ramón Gómez de la Serna's texts—could be the basis of the film I wanted to make. We worked in complete harmony, joining up ideas, discarding the ones that weren't viable, either because the succession of images seemed too obvious or, just the opposite, because it seemed too farfetched. We were searching for some sort of equilibrium between the rational and the irrational, an equilibrium which would be both unstable and invisible, in which the coherent side would help us understand the incoherent, would join the dream and the reality, our conscious and unconscious lives, and we made a point of avoiding any sort of symbolism.

"After the prologue to the film, we vacillated a little, discarding a number of ideas until Dalí came up with the bit about the cyclist and his box. 'Great,' I said, and we took that direction. It wasn't about joining up one image with another on the basis of what was reasonable or unreasonable. Instead we were looking for things that would give a sense of

continuity, a sense of continuity that would satisfy the needs of the unconscious without outraging the demands of the conscious. But it would have to be something that wasn't too obviously rational. That is, something that was closer, theoretically, to what Breton had defined as the very essence of surrealism. They say there's no logical connection between the sequences of *Un Chien andalou,* but that's simply wrong. If it were true, I would have cut the film into short *flashes*, thrown the different gags into different hats and mounted the sequences willy-nilly. It wasn't like that. Not because I couldn't do it that way; there was no *reason* not to do it that way. But simply because it's a surrealist film in which the images and the sequences follow each other according to a logical order, a logical order whose expression depends on the unconscious, which, of course, has its own *order.* Listen: the unconscious, reason, logic, order. When the dying man falls into a *garden,* he caresses the naked back of a statue (of a woman). That is, it's the normal consequence of the *fall*, it would be absurd if it were the other way around. We use our dreams—everyone knows this—to express something, not to express a meaningless hodgepodge.

"The only absurd thing about *Un Chien andalou* is the title. And it's not—how could it be? why would it be?—a desperate plea for murder, unless we're talking about the murder of Gala when we were planning *L'Âge d'or.* It has nothing to do with Lautréamont, but a lot with the Dalí of that time and with me, with what we were like, with our dreams."

* * *

"When I came back [to Madrid] from Paris, I used to go to the Café Castilla at lunch-time. Friends came. We had a regular gathering there."

"The Café Castilla. I remember. It was an actors' café, where there were people until very late at night."

"I used to go at midday."

"All the theaters are close-by. It's on the Calle del Barquillo. A pretty café, not very big, with the tables close together and with sofas. And on the walls there are lots of caricatures of authors and actors by Fresno. One day when I was there I see they've put up a screen. It was on a Wednesday. I ask: 'What's this about?' 'It's Wednesday, and don Miguel is coming to eat stew.' That day I was with…. I don't remember who. Anyway, there were two of us. We started to eat, and just at that point Primo de Rivera showed up with three or four chums. 'Have them get rid of the screen! We're among friends.' They sat down. 'Eh, young men. How about some wine?'"[42]

Buñuel screws up his face, shrugs his shoulders, mimes embarrassment.

"'Thank you.' What could we do? We drank the wine. We ate as usual. Then: 'Have them serve the young men two brandies.' 'Thank you.' We drank the brandies. What could we do? Anyway, it was a good era. After all, he didn't kill anybody."

"When was *Un Chien andalou* premiered?"

"*Un Chien andalou* had its premier in Madrid in 1929, at the Royalty Cinema. It was jammed with people: Ortega, d'Ors, Canedo, Ramón. Giménez Caballero gave a speech from one of the boxes, talking about avant-garde film and, at the end of it, he announced: 'And now, Luis Buñuel will say a few words.' I didn't know what to say. All I did was repeat what I'd written for *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution,* the bit about the appeal for crime."[43]

"Giménez Caballero's speech must have been published in *La Gaceta Literaria.*"

"He hadn't edited the film page for a year then, but he must have published it."

"Did you get along with Cocteau?"

"No. Cocteau wasn't one of us. He couldn't be. He had different values. He wasn't concerned about ethics. And don't forget that his shamelessness hurt Breton and a few others.[44] Of course, without Cocteau, *L'Âge d'or* wouldn't exist. He introduced me to Noailles; he insisted day after day that Noailles give me the money to do it. That he plagiarized it six months later, in his own way, with *Le Sang d'un poète* [*The Blood of a Poet*] is another problem, but it doesn't bother me. In spite of all that—that he 'protected' me, that he took me to Hyères [the Noailles' summer home] to work, in spite of all that, there was a time when Éluard, Aragon and I stood guard, we took turns waiting, two at a time, outside the door of his house near the Madeleine, in order to give him a beating. The idea about standing guard is just a saying. We were there for an hour, an hour and a half, and then we took the bus to go feel up whatever ass appealed to us. In spite of that, he always thought highly of me. With queers you're never on solid ground."

"And how did you make *L'Âge d'or*?"

"The Viscounts de Noailles invited me to dinner. They wanted to make a film. Since we were very respectful about protocol in our group, I asked Breton and the others for permission to go. They said it was fine. That bothered me a little, because it struck me as odd that a movement that pretended to be revolutionary would mix with the aristocracy. Of course, I changed my opinion when I met Marie Laure and the viscount. I've never known sponsors like them. Their discretion, their refinement and taste and delicacy were extraordinary. The first time we ate together, it was just the two of them and Auric and I. This had all been orchestrated, more or less, by Cocteau and Zervos, who had received money from them for his reviews.[45] And now that I think about it, I believe a very likeable man named Georges H. Rivière, who was the director or something like that of the Trocadero or of the Museum of Mankind [Rivière modernized the Trocadero, turning it into the Museum of Mankind]. They told me that Stravinsky was willing to write the music for a two-roll film, that maybe we could work something out between us, etc. etc. 'I don't collaborate with Catholics or with geniuses,' I answered. Apart from that moment, the meal was totally normal and pleasant. Four days later, there was a second dinner. Rivière came to see me—that's why I remembered he'd been there the first time. To sum it up: I should do what I wanted the way I wanted to."

"And how did you do it?"

"Well, more or less like *Un Chien andalou,* but this time on my own. It was impossible with Dalí. And, look, I wanted to do it with him. When I finished *Un Chien andalou,* I thought I wouldn't make any more films, and I started writing gags. I wrote quite a few. I started joining them together, and I tried to show them to Dalí. It was the summer after the premier of *Un Chien andalou.* I left Jeanne in Lloret de Mar, and I went to Figueras. When I got to Dalí's house, I heard lots of yelling. Dalí's father opened the door and told me, 'I don't want to see him again; he has to go. Forgive me, but it's best that you two go to Cadaqués and do whatever you want to.' Dalí had just had just held his famous exhibition in Barcelona, the one with the painting where he had written: 'I spit on the portrait of my mother.' 'I don't want to see him here again,' his father repeated. 'My father,' Dalí said, 'can't accept the fact that I've spent all the money I made on Gala. It's the materialist explanation of history, because the truth is that he expected me to give him all the money I made from the exhibition in Barcelona.'

So we went to Cadaqués. Dalí was transformed: 'Boy! You can't imagine. She's marvelous, beautiful, smart as a whip.' Out of his mind. It was Gala's fault, of course. Magritte was there, and Pansers [actually Goemans], the Belgian, and Éluard and Gala. I didn't know Gala. We were all together in the café of the hotel there in the plaza—I don't know if it still exists—and later we took a walk to Dalí's house, chatting all the way. And that's when I stepped on it, as I've told you more than once, saying that I hated women with a gap between their legs so their sex is in a kind of wedge. The next day, on the beach, with her in a bathing suit, I saw that that was precisely the shape of her body. I'm not prejudiced, but that woman had been a lover of de Chirico, of Max Ernst, of Man Ray, and she was married to Éluard. Éluard went back to Paris, and Gala stayed in Cadaqués.[46]

Dalí was under her thumb. She lived with Éluard for another year before they broke up and she married Salvador. Salvador was a virgin. He had always been very dismissive of us when it came to the question of sex. You can't imagine the letter he wrote me when he went to bed with Gala. A complete apologia for coitus as though he alone had had the experience! I probably still have the letter. Of course, if I find it, I'll tear it up. He was under a spell. It was impossible to work with him."

"Why did you want to kill her?"

"Well, Éluard went back to Paris, as I said. Gala stayed on at the hotel, with her daughter, and she began to provoke us, wind us up, start fights. She kept making snide remarks. The next day, we went by boat beyond Cabo [Cape] de Creus to eat paella. You've been there. It was a beautiful day; the water was transparent; there were waves and rocks. I said, 'It looks like a Sorolla seascape.' As usual, Dalí started protesting, 'How? Why? Are you blind? This is Nature. What does it have to do with…?' Gala jumped in: 'You two are like dogs in heat.' It bothered me. And later on, while we were eating, she just kept on at us, needling us…."

"But why?"

"Jealousy. Our close friendship bothered her, because we understood each other perfectly at that time. It got so bad that I tried to kill her right there, on the beach—seriously tried—by strangling her. And Dalí clutching my legs, desperate, begging me not to do it. And Gala's daughter—how old was she then? Maybe twelve?—was running around on the heights up above, over the rocks, as though nothing were wrong. But, to sum things up, I wasn't born to kill women. The huge difference between our collaborations on *Un Chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or* is Gala's fault. Dalí admits it. In *Un Chien andalou,* I'd come up with one idea, he'd come up with another. We accepted or rejected things without arguing, with no bad feelings. Everything was different with *L'Âge d'or.* Things just didn't work any longer. We couldn't agree on anything. He didn't like what I suggested, and I didn't like what he came up with. 'That's Gala's idea,' I'd think. And, in fact, it was from Gala, and I didn't like it. This happened again and again. I accepted a few—very few—things. We worked for three days, and then I finished the screenplay on my own. A little later, when the Noailles made me their offer, I sent Dalí the script. He sent it back to me, saying it was fine. While I was shooting the film, he went to Málaga with Gala."

"He complains, more than anything, that you changed the title on him."[47]

"I don't remember. No matter how hard I try, I just don't remember."

* * *

"Going back to *L'Âge d'or* and, in fact, to *Un Chien andalou,* the gags…."

"Yes, the gags. A tumbrel passes through a formal parlor. A man kills his son for the hell of it. Out of a hundred gags, maybe thirty would pass muster. The rest were tossed out, because they were bad. I went to the Abbaye Saint Bernard, the Noailles' castle. Marie Laure [de Noailles] was there with Cocteau, Bérard and company.[48] Almost all of them were opium addicts. You couldn't even go into some of the rooms, the smell of opium was so strong. I've never taken any drugs. One time somebody—I don't remember who—offered me cocaine as though it were the most natural thing in the world. He put a little powder between my index finger and my thumb. I must have inhaled wrong, because the only thing that happened was I lost all feeling on one side of my nose just as though I'd gone to the dentist.

"I finished *L'Âge d'or* in a month. Auric kept me company. The viscount gave me a check for seven-hundred thousand francs, and when I finished filming, three weeks later, I returned what I hadn't used, which added up to three-hundred thousand francs, along with a bundle of bills and invoices. With great elegance, while I was making my way to a window, he threw all the papers into the fire. I was sorry I hadn't stolen a little from him.

During all that period of time, Dalí was sending me letters from Málaga. I shot the film in twenty days. *Un Chien andalou* had taken fifteen. When I showed it for the first time to the viscount and some friends of his and to Dalí, it was a triumph. 'I love it,' Dalí told me. 'It looks like a movie from Hollywood.'[49] We showed it on different days to different groups of the viscount's friends and, one time, to the entire surrealist group. That night, the viscount had the delicacy to leave us alone in his house. They all showed up, and Tzara started ridiculing the aristocracy, and they emptied at least fifty bottles of alcohol and liqueurs they found in a refrigerator. The viscount had the good taste to refrain from saying a single word to me about it. There was, of course, a session for Cocteau and his friends. The film was premiered in the Pantheon Cinema. The *crème de la crème* of the aristocracy was invited. The viscounts greeted them as they arrived: 'Monsieur le Marqui…. Prince…. Monsieur le Duc…. Madame la Duchesse …' etc. etc. They saw the film, and when it was over, while the viscounts were waiting to hear their opinions and accept their congratulations, the great majority left without even saying good-bye, and the viscount, who was the president of the Jockey Club, was dismissed from his position without any ado. And the Princesse de Poix, his mother-in-law, went straight to the Vatican to ask that her son-in-law not be excommunicated.[50] I received a telegram from Gaston Bergery, offering me a job in Hollywood if I would only make a few public remarks to rev up the scandal. Aragon and I went to see him. I refused point-blank."

"Because they're very Catholic, there's a rumor going around that maybe, at the last minute, the viscount had the negative burned. Does he have it?"

"No. It's at the Film Archive [in Mexico City]. There are, incidentally, some illegal copies around as well. I don't know what will happen [with the film] between now and the viscount's death, but he's one of the most likeable, courteous and fine men I've ever known."[51]

"Was it you who sonorized the film?"

"I do it in all my films."[52]

"I've read that they have just premiered a sonorized version of *Un Chien andalou* in Madrid."

"I haven't seen it. I don't know what they've done with it. The day it premiered, I was

behind the screen with a phonograph and some records—Wagner and some tangos—and I changed the records as the film progressed. I don't know if they've followed my instructions."

"*L'Âge d'or* didn't have the same meaning as *Un Chien andalou*."

"You're wrong. It was made exactly the same way. I didn't try to say anything special. I used what I call apparitions: visual images, gags. But I managed to do something in *L'Âge d'or* that maybe hadn't occurred to me in *Un Chien andalou*: give free rein to my rebellion against established society, all communicated by the situations and the images.

"And the title?" (I know I've already asked him, but I go back to the question, hoping he may remember more.)

"I remember that Dalí wanted to call it, 'C'est dangereux de se pencher au dehors.' I don't remember how *L'Âge d'or* came up. I don't remember whose idea it was."[53]

"You said a few days ago that the mechanism of film went very well with surrealism. I have the opposite impression, and Breton must have come close to agreeing with me. In his theoretical works, he never refers to film as a form of surrealist expression. What happened is that you invented it. And I think Breton must have been right, because if surrealism means chance, automatic writing, anti-realism, the intervention of the unknown, I don't see how film, which involves a lot of thinking, a lot of measuring, of anticipation—and yours especially, which is almost mathematical in its precision—can be considered as a form of surrealist expression."

"It's exactly for all those reasons you mention that *Un Chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or* are surrealist films. I saw things, images I believed could be joined even though they didn't have any apparent connection. A ship leaves a rug merchant on the shore, and he starts walking, loaded down with his wares, through the desert. They aren't dreams. For example, in *Subida al cielo* [*Mexican Bus Ride*] what happens on the bus isn't a dream; it's what you see, when you're sitting down, with the back-and-forth movement and the lurching of the vehicle. The images are born from the other images; they're linked together. This doesn't mean that if I'd been a good writer I wouldn't have decided to be a filmmaker, but I've told you before that I'm a bad writer, and I've always needed some writer at my side for the dialogues."

"Speaking of Spanish surrealism of the literary kind, Bergamín defined it as a 'Cordoniú style surrealism.' Do you agree?"

"That's wonderful! A cheap champagne kind of surrealism! That's Rafael Alberti's surrealism, and Aleixandre's and Federico's too. They're first-rate poets. First-class lyric poets. But they're not surrealists. They did things, especially Rafael, that seemed surrealistic, but it was totally superficial. It wasn't the same thing at all. Surrealism is something else. It's a moral order."

"How do you explain the fact that everybody talks about *L'Âge d'or,* but nobody has seen it?"

"You're wrong. A lot of people have seen it."

"But not like *Belle de Jour* [*Belle de Jour*]."

"Of course not. But the majority of people who want to see it…"

"Not at all."

"…have made unauthorized copies."[54]

"Let's take it as given that you and Dalí were convinced by the principles laid out in

Breton's first manifesto, in 1924, and that you put them into practice in *Un Chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or.* But how do you explain that films like *Nazarín* (*Nazarin*), *Viridiana* and *Él* (*El*) are considered surrealist when they have, at the very least, a unifying idea, a narrative logic that has nothing to do with what Breton set out?"

"The moral line is surrealist."

"Breton abandoned automatic writing for 'objective humor'—black humor—and chance, which he also called "objective." But humor and chance are not only different, they're opposed. Have you ever counted on chance to give you a result you could use?"

"Sometimes. For example, in *Viridiana.* I hadn't planned the scene that's become so famous of Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper.* But when I got to the set and saw the table and the white tablecloth and the way the beggars were positioned, I was reminded of it. And then I told them to find me four more extras. Because, if you look, there're only nine beggars, but there are thirteen at the table. If I'd thought about it ahead of time, it would have been easy to put thirteen in the film instead of nine."

"Going farther back, when you started filming *Un Chien andalou,* were you planning to join the surrealist group?"

"No, but I felt a great affinity for them."

"Were you hoping things would end in disaster, according to the norms of the school?"

"Yes and no. That was up to the audience. When I saw that the whole group—Aragon, Breton, Soupault—was there, it changed my sense of the situation. As you know, I was behind the screen, putting on the records. And my pockets were full of stones to throw at the audience if they started acting up. But it was a triumph."

* * *

"Another one who was no fool was the famous Count of Foxá. Every time I go to Paris, I'm received by the consul, who was his secretary or something and who still—it's a bit odd—venerates him. Foxá was shrewd. I have the first volume of a series–I don't know if it's still coming out—called, like Galdos's series, *Episodios nacionales* ['National episodes']. In it, he talks about how he felt the Second Coming had arrived when he heard José Antonio Primo de Rivera speak for the first time in the Teatro de la Comedia.[55] What he doesn't tell is that that day he was with me, and we were going to the Palacio de la Prensa for the only showing of *L'Âge d'or.* We ran into I don't know who, and they told him, 'Come with us. We're going to the Teatro de la Comedia, because José Antonio Primo de Rivera is going to speak, and he's a great guy.' Foxá told me that he'd have other chances to see the film, and he went off with his friends to hear the founder of the Falange."

"If he hadn't gone that day, he would have gone another, but he never got to see *L'Âge d'or.*"

"Exactly. All of leftist Madrid was there or at least who we considered leftist at the time: Ortega, Canedo, Federico. When we were leaving, I told Federico, 'Let's go'—I don't remember where—'eat some lamb chops,' or something like that. Federico—he was wearing his little bow tie—hesitated and said with that accent that I still hear in my ears even though they don't work so well anymore: 'Luis, I didn't like your film at all.'" He imitates the Andalusian accent. "And I answered that it didn't matter, what did a movie have to do with lamb chops. But it's odd that on the same day *L'Âge d'or* was shown in Madrid, the Spanish Falange was founded."

"Talk to me about anarchism and the influence of Sade on surrealism."[56]

"When I was twenty-eight I was an anarchist, and the discovery of Sade was, for me, something absolutely extraordinary. It had nothing to do with eroticism, but with atheism. What I realized was that up until then, to put it baldly, they had deceived me completely about the real meaning of freedom and about what religion really was, and especially, about morality. I was an atheist. I had lost my faith, but I had replaced it with liberalism, with anarchism, with a belief in man's inherent goodness. At heart, I was convinced that human beings had a predisposition toward goodness that was corrupted by the organization of the world, by capital. Suddenly I realized that all this meant nothing, that it could all exist (and if not all this, then something else) and that nothing, nothing at all, was worth thinking about unless it was the absolute freedom with which a man could operate if he chose to and that neither good nor evil existed. Imagine what this meant to an anarchist. The extraordinary thing is that it was then, in 1929, that I understood the reason behind my attraction to, my liking for, my complete rapport with surrealism. Sade had a greater influence than anyone, not just on me, but on the surrealists in general, on surrealism."

"One night I was eating supper with Denise Tual, [the surrealist poet] Robert Denos and I don't remember who else, at Tual's house. She said, 'You haven't read Sade?' 'No.' 'You have to read him.' And that was a real revolution. It's when I began distrusting all our culture, my culture, my education, everything, because he was an extraordinary individual—not because of his erotic interests, no; that doesn't interest me much—but because he takes up the divine and the human in every aspect: the social, the religious, the political, the historical, the cultural, everything, right? I saw that they had hidden something very serious at the university. They had told me about Dante's *Divine Comedy,* that piece of rubbish, and other 'great' literature, but they had never mentioned the existence of Sade. Reading Sade for me was a complete moral revolution. It coincided with the moral revolution of surrealism. It was around '29 when I read Sade…."

…

"Had you read Sade before *Un Chien andalou*?"

"No. Later. Later. I didn't know anybody in Paris. *Un Chien* introduced me to Paris society. If I was eating supper at Denise Tual's house with Robert Desnos and so on, that meant I had already made *Un Chien.* I remember Tual lent me the first Sade book I ever read…. *L'Âge d'or* was made in '30, my other film in '29. So I read Sade after *Un Chien andalou* and before *L'Âge d'or.*"

[Aub compares the fate of *L'Âge d'or,* which could not be shown except privately and in film clubs until 1980, as we have seen (Buñuel interjects that the regular monthly showings of *L'Âge d'or* at the Cinemathèque in Paris, and the showings at festivals in London and New York always have attracted big crowds, so that anyone who really wants to see the film can do so), with the fate of Sade's works, which were almost impossible to obtain in the twenties and thirties and which, even at the time of the interviews, were still not recognized as classics. Buñuel rejoins, "It's because Sade is very violent, very violent from the political and social point of view." Aub adds, "…and boring. If he wrote well, he would be…." Starting with Buñuel's first reference to eating dinner with Denise Tual and ending with Aub's reference to Sade's bad writing, I have interpolated material from the FMA. Buñuel punctuates this talk with little blows to the table or chair to emphasize his points. Entrevistas Buñuel Cinta 24, 56–60.]

"Some people say you're cruel."

"This business of my cruelty … it's not even worth talking about. To be cruel, I think, you have to be brave. I haven't committed many acts of valor in my life. One, that's become a part of history, or at least of legend, is the time I sliced that calf's eye at the beginning of *Un Chien andalou.* People think I did it just like that, cool as a cucumber. But it took all my courage. It was one of the bravest things I've ever done. Imagine! Cutting the eye of a calf that was already dead! They brought me the calf's head from the slaughterhouse. I put the mascara on the eye myself. It was revolting. A person goes down in history for doing something like that…. I did it for film."

"For art?"

"No, not for art … to explain a dream. No, not to explain it, to represent it, to reproduce it. There's a psychoanalyst who insists the razor blade is a penis…. He's dead sure. It's absurd. Maybe it is a penis. But we don't know. And that's the way things have gone. Sometime after that, Jacques Prévert took me to the Ministry of War to see a sixteen millimeter film made by Jean Painlevé. Jean's father was the Prime Minister."

"Right. Paul."

"He showed me a film called *Homage à Luis Buñuel.* My god! This young man, who was no fool, really thought he'd made a film 'in honor of the cruelest of filmmakers.' There was a warehouse full of cadavers, then the head of an old woman, she was dead, and they were performing I don't know what kind of operation on her, and the thing is: they pulled her brain out through her nose. I had to leave. It was horrible."[57]

"Well. You're not exactly a model of valor. You're afraid of fear itself."

"You're right. I am."

"And then, as we get older, that 'cruelty' disappears. It thins out, it fades away. It makes me think it has something to do with our virility."

"Maybe. It's odd. What I was always afraid of, and still am, is crying, for whatever reason."

"Even watching a Libertad Lamarque movie."[58]

"Especially watching a Libertad Lamarque movie!"

"Maxime Alexandre says, in a book he's just published, that what you would have liked, in your younger days, was being shut up in a whore house and going to bed with six or seven of the women at the same time."[59]

"That's just a lie. I've never done anything like that. The thing is: in those days, the surrealists were always talking about sex, and I do remember, in fact, that we talked about a harem and what fun it would be to have one. I'd say, 'I like the fourth one.' And then, 'No, I don't like her so much after all. I prefer number eight, but I'll go to bed with the first.' That's where the idea must have come from."

* * *

"The next day [after a talk Buñuel gave on vanguard film, followed by the projection of several examples, at the Residencia de Estudiantes, on 21 May 1927] Ortega called me, Juan Ramón called me, everybody called me. Ortega sent me a telegram. Don Alberto, another: 'Ortega is expecting you.' I went. 'This thing about film,' Ortega told me, 'if I were twenty-five, I would take up film.' They didn't know there was such a thing as art film, right? They knew nothing about Cavalcanti, about René Clair, about all of those people

working at the time. They knew absolutely nothing about it. Juan Ramón Jiménez stayed after the talk because I showed eight or ten films from the vanguard period from Paris. This was in 1927. I showed *Entr'acte* [*Entr'acte,* Picabia and Clair]*; Bian, le jeune* ["Young Bian," unidentified]*; La Roue* [*The Wheel,* Gance]. I don't remember what else. I showed eight or ten films, of the kind that…."

"Okay. And the business about the examination?"

"Since the Conference Society was very serious—people like Frobenius, and I don't know who else, gave talks—to make sure that I wouldn't make a fool of myself, the president, who was something of a brute, questioned me to see if I was going to say anything crazy. And two or three days before the conference, the Marqués de Palomares, Alberto Jiménez Fraud, Ortega y Gasset, friends from the Residencia, I don't remember who else, sat me down and asked me questions about the conference. I think Morente came too, because he was a friend of Ortega's. I gave them a copy of the talk, and they approved it. I didn't say anything embarrassing. And after that, I showed the films."[60]

"Like all of us, you liked the North American silent comedies, and you must have been influenced by them, by that succession of gags. I get the impression that the best thing about your work—the part of it that you like best—involves the gags, whether they're developed to form a whole sequence or short and simple. That's why you say you don't want to tell stories any more, that you've lost interest in them. To what extent, then, have gags determined many of the sequences in your films?"

"Of course, I like gags, but I don't think that's unusual."

"Not unusual, but—keeping your ideas in mind—a gag *is* an illustration. Here's what I mean: you always try to create a universe out of illustrations, as if [the film] were a textbook, made up of a basic theorem and then a series of illustrations or, better yet, just the illustrations so that the audience can figure out the rule on its own."

"Maybe, but you know I've never liked being pinned down."

* * *

We eat lunch together on April 14th.

"Forty years ago in 1931, I was in San Sebastián. We had gone there in the afternoon to let the prisoners out of jail, and I got tremendously drunk on cider. I cried and even made speeches. Getting drunk on cider is just awful. It takes at least seven liters. I was in Saragossa. I had just gotten in from Hollywood, where I'd broken my contract. I had a good bit of money and I wanted to take a trip—the only one I've ever wanted to take in my life—to the South Seas, to Hawaii, to Fiji. I didn't go. I didn't go because of the horoscope Breton had done for me [predicting he would die in a faraway land]. In New York I spent all the money I had. I got to Paris on Wednesday, and on Friday—Holy Friday—they were playing their drums in Calanda. I caught a taxi that took me as far as Hendaye [on the border] and another from Hendaye to Calanda. On Sunday I went to Saragossa, and on Monday or Tuesday, the Riego hymn woke me up.[61] My god, it was wild! I've never seen such enthusiasm and so many people out in the streets. There I was: in the café with Sánchez Ventura and with Gaos, who was a professor in the university at the time. My father would have been happy [see interview with Gaos.]"

"Did you vote?"

"No. I'm not interested in that kind of thing. I was never a Republican. But the next

day we went to the bull ring. It must have been the fourteenth or the fifteenth of April, and it was overflowing with people. It was, of course, an anarcho-sindicalist meeting. Sánchez-Ventura and I were in the president's box. In the café, we had said to Gaos, 'Are you coming?' and Gaos—always so serious: 'No. I have to talk to my cohorts.' Gaos was a socialist. Well, there we were, in the president's box. Ten people sitting down, and the two of us standing up behind them. Suddenly, somebody opened the gates of the bull pen, and a guy ran out holding up a Republican flag. A big fight got underway. Those people weren't interested in the Republic. All they wanted was to have their way: 'The Republic is okay, but our moment is coming soon.' 'The Republic is just a first step.' I wasn't an anarchist, but I always empathized with them. Even now. But the movement has nothing to do with reality. Maybe that's why I like it. I went to Paris soon after that. *L'Âge d'or* had premiered on December thirtieth of the year before [actually, 28 November]. I had begun to think about *Tierra sin pan* [*Land without Bread*]."

"About that time they must have been showing *Old and New* in Paris and in the film clubs in Madrid…. Apart from Legendre's book, did that film have any effect on your decision to shoot *Tierra sin pan*?"[62]

"I don't know. I don't remember. I was in Paris during the War against the Convents in '32.[63] I told the surrealists: 'Now's the time. Let's go and burn down the Prado.' Breton was scandalized. The same as he was when I suggested burning—in the Place du Tertre—the negative of *L'Âge d'or.* 'My god, no! Not our works! What would be left?' That's what they were like. Today they'd suggest burning all my works, and I'd do it without a moment's thought. And I'd burn every work of art without a twinge of remorse. I'm not interested in art, but in people. You think it's an anarchist idea? You're right. I get more anarchistic every day. What's the use of so many works of art? What have they ever done for us? Look at the situation human beings are in today! It's pathetic! We're better off with the Virgin Mary, who, at least, represents chastity and purity. I have no interest in geniuses if they're not decent people. And almost all the best art is being made, or has been made, by sons of bitches. It's not worthwhile. I don't accept it. I'm not interested in it."

"How about surrealist painting?"

"Surrealist pictorial art is, more than anything, a pastiche. Dalí, Chirico, what's the difference. All their invention is based on copies. They use art as a basis for interpretation. They're interpreters, translators, traitors."

"What happened between Elsa [Triolet] and Aragon?"[64]

"It must have been in 1932 when I got a *pneumathique* from Aragon at seven-thirty in the morning. Remember they open, or used to open, the post offices at seven in the morning. 'Come here. I need to talk to you urgently.' They were living in a hotel then. A caged lion. A tiger. Frantic. Yes, it must have been in '32. He was handsome, what they call a handsome man. Pacing from one side to the other of the room, furious. Sure of himself. Frantic, but sure of himself. Elsa had gone. They'd had an argument. It was when they had very little money, and Elsa earned a living making necklaces. 'She's abandoned me. And the Party has abandoned me too: Get out, you're a surrealist! And our charming surrealist friends publish this piece of shit'—and he hands me a pamphlet: *L'Affaire Aragon*—'where they excommunicate me for being a communist.' He had called me so he could let off steam with somebody who was a good friend."[65]

"Were you a member of the Party back then?"

"No, no, no. I never joined the Party. When I went with the others to *L'Huma* [*L'Humanité*, the communist newspaper] so that they'd tell them off, Aragon said: 'Our friend Buñuel is here; he's with us.' 'Let him in,' said Legros. But I didn't belong to the Party."[66]

Luis was a surrealist, and all this took place at the time of *Le surrealisme au service de la révolution;* on the first page of the first issue in 1929 [actually 1930] the original telegram from the Soviet organization is—badly—reproduced.

QUESTION

INTERNATIONAL BUREAU OF REVOLUTIONARY LITERATURE REQUESTS ANSWER FOLLOWING QUESTION: WHAT POSITION WOULD YOU ADOPT IF IMPERALISM DECLARES WAR ON THE SOVIETS. STOP. POST OFFICE BOX 630. MOSCOW.

ANSWER

COMRADES, IF IMPERIALISM DECLARES WAR ON SOVIETS OUR POSITION WILL AGREE WITH DIRECTIVES THIRD INTERNATIONAL POSITION OF MEMBERS OF FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY.

IF YOU FIND BETTER USE OF OUR FACULTIES INVOLVING SPECIFIC MISSION RELATED TO OUR ROLE AS INTELLECTUALS WE ARE AT YOUR DISPOSITION.

IN CURRENT SITUATION OF UNARMED CONFLICT ANY DELAY IN PUTTING APPROPRIATE ABILITIES AS INTELLECTUALS IN SERVICE OF REVOLUTION IS POINTLESS.

"You couldn't have filmed *Tierra sin pan* in 1932. It must have been the minister of Public Instruction under Samper who wouldn't allow the film to be distributed, and that would have been in 1934."[67]

"There was no money."

"And all that time you had the film in the can?"

"Up until 1937 when, as I said before, Araquistáin sent it to be sonarized at the embassy's cost."[68]

"The truth is, Luis, you've never spent a cent of your own money on your films. Who gave you money for the first one? Your mother. You were willing to do it for no charge, okay, but to actually pay … never."

"What could I do? That's the way I was brought up."

"And the odd thing is you're not really interested in money, as long as you have enough to live comfortably."

"That's the way it is. What's to be done?"

"Nothing. Anyway, I agree with you. Tell me some other meaty anecdotes."

"Did you know that I worked with [André] Gide for four days on making—well, making is a little too strong—on discussing the cinematic possibilities of *Les Caves du Vatican* [*The Vatican Cellars*]?"

"No. I didn't know."

"I read the book twice. Then, every day between four and seven, I went to work at his house, an apartment, on the rue Bonaparte, I think, or around there. 'I know nothing about film. You should just tell me how to do it.' So we were hard at work. Luckily, on the fourth day Vaillant-Couturier came to see me—he was the one who introduced me to Gide—to say that Moscow had decided not to make the film; it was a film that I was going to direct in the U.S.S.R. for Mezrapon, which was the official Soviet film company then."

"But was that before or after Gide's break with the communists?"

"Before, long before. It must have been around '33. I had already made *L'Âge d'or* and

Tierra sin pan. Yes. I remember that we took Gide to see *Tierra sin pan* in a silent version. Before Warner's gave me the contract and I went to Madrid, and before I got sciatica too. You can't imagine the money I made without doing anything."[69]

"But didn't they reject the film after Gide's trip to the U.S.S.R. and his book on the trip?"

"No, not at all. That was much later."

"Not that much if you look carefully: three years. Gide went to deliver a funeral oration for [Maxim] Gorky in Red Square, and later he took his big trip and before he left they suggested he sign a telegram of thanks to Stalin, 'father of all the people.'"

"Yes, he told me about it: 'You must certainly understand that I couldn't sign it.' 'Why not?' I would have done it. It was a way to help, and to help us."

"Yes, because that must have happened at the embassy, at that famous dinner when you decided who would sit where, like the head of protocol you claimed to be."

"Of course. I wasn't going to seat Aragon and Gide next to each other. I put Aragon beside me and Gide beside Araquistáin."

"Why did Gide change the last page of his book?"

"I must have been in Madrid when that happened, at the Intellectuals Conference, that is, during the Brunete offensive, in 1937. That was when Malraux managed, thanks to a barrage of phone calls, to get Gide to change the last page of the book, adding a drop of hope, because of the help the U.S.S.R. was giving us [in Spain]."[70]

* * *

"Have you ever participated in orgies?"

"Orgies, don't make me laugh. Orgies aren't just a question of giving it or taking it in the rear end by a man or woman. No, sir. Orgies depend most of all on how much a person has drunk, on how long he can last and how much money he has in hand. I've experienced 'normal' orgies in Hollywood, from 1930 on with Lya Lys. There with Ugarte…. Lya Lys … what a woman! And later on, at Chaplin's. Now, those were orgies. I don't know how he managed it, but it always turned out that the women fought with each other, and it was pretty amazing. And the orgies in Montecarlo, with Cocteau. The funniest part was hearing Cocteau giving classes in morality to twenty young girls who made fifty francs a day as long as they remained virgins. If they got pregnant, they were dismissed immediately. I chose a white Russian who was sixteen, and when I found out about that rule, I dumped her. Going back to Hollywood, one night Lya Lys went off with a lesbian, and then they got into a fight. I'm telling you all this to say that the thing about orgies is … they never work out. They're always disasters."

"What happened to you with Metro?"

"The representative of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer was a friend of Noailles' wife. He called and offered me a contract for six months' pay and travel so that I would see what a 'real' studio was like and work in a series of different departments, all of this provided that I give him a recommendation signed by forty people who had seen *L'Âge d'or.* I told the viscount, who smiled and brought me the testimony of forty of the most illustrious people in France. When I got to Hollywood, the boss told me, 'What a peculiar contract!' The pay wasn't extravagant: two-hundred and fifty dollars a week. 'Where do you want to start?' he asked me. There was a big board with all the productions in progress at the time. 'To watch a shoot,' I told him. 'Which movie are you interested in?' he asked. There was one with Greta

Garbo. I said, 'This one.' 'Fine.' They filled out cards for me, passes I'd need to get in, and I headed out to the studios. They were filming a close-up of the actress. I was about ten meters away, watching, curious. Suddenly, she called over a hairy Jew and had a word with him in English, and then they threw me, shamefully, out of the studio.

I never went back to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Well, yes, I did go back to get paid. I saw Dolores del Río there and tons of other people. I was happy, telling myself, 'I know this one and that one.' From their films, of course. It was during Prohibition, and I devoted my time to drinking everything I could get my hands on. That's when I got to be close friends with Eduardo Ugarte. One day Tom Kirkpatrick, a likeable Irishman who was a sort of secretary to Irving Thalberg, one of the most sinister people that ever came out of Hollywood—he's the one who hounded von Stroheim, who mutilated *Greed* and didn't let him finish *Merry-Go-Round*—Kirkpatrick told me, 'Mr. Thalberg wants you to go to Projection Room Number Five-hundred and something to see some shots and some tests with Lily Damita.' 'Tell him I don't want to watch whores.' When I still had two months to go, I suggested that they pay me for one month and cut me loose. Tom went off. The next day they told me they accepted my proposition, and I had a bad name for the rest of my life in Hollywood."[71]

"When did you shoot *Tierra sin pan*?"

"I filmed *Tierra sin pan* in 1932 because Ramón Acín won the lottery.[72] He gave me twenty thousand pesetas, and later the local anarchists demanded their share, but I don't think they got much out of him. I had been very impressed by Legendre's book and the king's trip. Look, here's Legendre's book." He hands it to me: *Les Jurdes, Étude de Géographie Humaine* ['Las Hurdes: A Study of Human Geography'], Maurice Legendre, Bordeaux-Paris, 1927.

"We went to Extremadura, Eli Lotar [the French cinematographer], Pierre Unik and I. We were there in March and April. I edited the film on top of a kitchen table, using a magnifying glass. That's why some of the images are out of focus. I didn't have a moviola, I didn't have jack shit. It's not much of an editing job."

"That's what you say. It's hard to judge the editing because I've only seen the silent version with you adding the commentary, but it seemed fine to me. It's a shame that the people who talk about that film have never seen it with the original text, because the commentary was only recorded in French and in English. How can that be?! The only film Luis Buñuel shot during the time of the Republic! And it was never finished! And it was banned! And no one in Spain will be able to see it until—and I'm being optimistic—a half century after it was made! And I'm absolutely certain that it won't have lost any of its horror and that the sequence of the roosters will still shock us. And that sequence must be even worse than sadistic for you, because it's not about men, it's about animals. What excuses did they give for banning it?"

"That it denigrated Spain."

"But it didn't denigrate Spain, because the same thing could have happened in Serbia or in Paraguay. No. What it denigrates is mankind. But there are other things, more elegant things that taint the decision even more."

"Well, the one who banned it was señor Villalobos, who was Lerroux's Minister for Public Education, backed by the Ministers of Governance and of State."[73]

…

"We found out through a friend that they had sent a telegram banning the film because it 'denigrates Spain.' Later, when the [rightest] radicals were out of power, we managed to get Marañón, who was president of the Hurdes Committee, to see it. I went with Sánchez Ventura. When the projection was finished, Marañón said: 'You've shown the very worst of the place. I've seen carts overflowing with wheat there.' 'You sound like one of Lerroux's ministers,' I told him. And I packed up my movie and left.[74] As far as filming the very worst, he was right. Otherwise … what was I doing there? I thought there was nothing left for me to do in film, just as I'd thought after *Un Chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or.* And to do something—I didn't need the money—I made commercial movies from that point on until the beginning of the war. I felt a little embarrassed about it. You already know that I made four commercial films, and Urgoiti was happy with me because he said I saved him money and time."[75]

"Was the disaster of *Tierra sin pan* what led you to take jobs with American film companies?"

"No. No. Not at all. I wanted to practice, to learn. Anyway, after *Un Chien andalou,* after *L'Âge d'or* and *Tierra sin pan,* I told myself, 'Good-bye to film. Who would give me a contract?' And, besides that, I love order and organization, so the whole business of managing and directing was something I was happy doing. On top of it, by that time I was done with the surrealists. They didn't interest me anymore."

"But surrealism did."

"Of course. It's the only thing in our time that's worth taking seriously. But the arguments, the fights within the group, Dalí's trajectory, even Breton's. I didn't care about any of that. In fact, we were all against surrealism, that is, we were against the surrealists. That's why, one morning after I'd had a bad attack of sciatica and had stayed in reading lots of Arniches, I turned up at Ricardo Urgoiti's house and told him, 'I have 20,000 duros. Let's make *Don Quintin, el amargao.*'[76] 'Are you going to direct it?' 'No way. We can use Luis Marquina. We'll pay him 2,000 pesetas.' It was a huge success. We made a lot of money, and then we made our other movies. Jean Grémillon"—the French director—"showed up for a price of 15,000 pesetas, but when he finished his film, the war had broken out. All I did was make sure they shot the films as fast as possible and spent as little as possible. I didn't need money. I had a contract with Warner Brothers, in Madrid, for 4,000 pesetas a week as the head of dubbing. Pereira, the engineer, who's around here somewhere, was head of CEA (Spanish American Cinematography). I still didn't see a lot of people. I'd added Ricardo Urgoiti to the group of old friends—today he's president of the Spanish Antibiotics Society. I still got together with Pepín Bello, Sánchez Ventura, Urgoiti, Vicens, Moreno Villa and, of course, with Viñes and his wife, Loulou, who was Francis Jourdain's daughter. I have a photograph somewhere of the farewell dinner we gave them.[77]

"…What about the business [Aub is consulting notes] when you tried to buy Las Batuecas. You went with Pepín Bello."

"It must have been the twelfth of July. I was in Salamanca, and we went to Las Batuecas. The Sacred Heart nuns wanted to sell the place. I had the 150,000 pesetas they were asking for it—for a whole convent, eh! It was a whole world, absolutely beautiful. They had already arranged to sell it, with a down payment and installments, but when I told them I could pay it all in cash, they said, 'It's yours.' We agreed to sign the documents on the twentieth of July. I went back to Madrid, and if it weren't because the war broke out, you and I would probably be enjoying the fresh air right now."

"How about this note: 'Luis rushes out of the Taberna del Segoviano, where he was eating a tortilla with Sánchez Ventura'? 'There's a spider. A spider! I'll wait for you at Platerías.' What's that about?"

"That's right. I saw a spider web on a *boto* and I took off, because there was a spider. You know I can't stand them."

"A *boto*? What's that?"

"It's what we call the hides in Aragón, the big hides for wine that used to hang from the rafters of the tavern. I saw the spider with its huge feet, and I took off running. I admire spiders, but I can't bear them. I don't know why. All the Buñuels are like that. They only bother me at night. Not in the day. I can look at them in the daytime. Making I don't remember what film here I actually held a spider. It was as big as my hand. Maybe it's those four pairs of feet."

* * *

"When I'd been in Paris for a while, I got a telegram from [Wenceslao] Roces, who at that point was Sub-Secretary for Public Education [of the Republic], ordering me to go to Madrid to film. I went down to see Araquistáin and showed it to him. He asked, 'What do you want to do?' 'To stay here. You can't film in the trenches. The front's useless for filming. If it's to make a film, it's better to make it in a studio, where you can see what happens. But I don't think that's what he has in mind.' I stayed."

"I ran into Karmen in Cuba, at the Cultural Conference in Havana. He showed me the film that he had made of his reports from Spain. I wept. But it was bad. You really couldn't see anything, except for the bombardments. They're very photogenic."[78]

"And dangerous. One day a young Spanish American showed up at the embassy wanting to see the military attaché. He was carrying a little case. There was no military attaché back then, and the air force division was outside of Paris. I had been warned. He was an elegant young man with a little moustache. He opened his case, took out four bombs and told me they were the best, that they were incredibly powerful for their size. He said he was part of an activist group in Burgos that had attacked the Spanish Republican consulates in Toulouse and in Perpignan and that he was betraying them because he was convinced they were wrong. I thanked him for his information, and he agreed to stay in contact with us. I took the bombs down to Araquistáin, who sent them to the French police to be analyzed and, of course, saved one for Moscow. The report was definite: they were extraordinarily powerful bombs. The fellow came back. We asked for more details. He gave them to us: the address, the name of the leader of the group, and so on. I asked him to meet with the leader in La Coupole. He told me he'd sit on the man's right. I invited Finkie and Germaine Montero to go with me for a drink,[79] and when we got to the terrace of the café our men were there. Big hugs all around. It turned out that the leader was also a South American and that he had worked in film with us in Madrid. Urgent calls went out from the ambassador to the prefect of police with all the details. They arrested the whole group. Three or four days later somebody informed me—I don't remember who—that they had been released. More calls to the prefect of police, who was a socialist. Nothing happened. A little later a bomb like those went off on the Elysian Fields. It destroyed a house and killed two cops. The attacks went on. Apparently, they suited, if not the government, then, say, a group of fascists concealed in the police force. No matter what the ambassador did—and I've told

you that Araquistáin was a terrific ambassador, far better than Ossorio and Pascua—no matter what he did those criminals were not arrested. I'm telling you all this so you'll see, one more time, just what the police force and the police are like: a power unto itself, totally disgusting."

"They're a mixed bag. I would never have gotten out of Djelfa if a guard hadn't helped me."[80]

"The bad thing is that we're sentimental."

"You never saw Dalí again?"

"In New York, in '42. The first time he went there. He organized a press conference. He was an unknown. Almost nobody went. 'Come tomorrow to a masked ball.' And he showed up with Gala, dressed like Lindbergh's murdered child, his face covered with blood. There was a scandal, but not the kind that he likes. Another press conference. How could they have thought he was referring to an eponymous hero who looked just like his father! Paranoia!"

"Did you see him?"

"Yes. I wanted to punch him in the nose. Not because of Lindbergh, but because he had gotten me thrown out of the museum. But I'm sentimental about my friends, and suddenly I found myself drinking a glass of champagne with him in the bar at the Regis, but in spite of that I told him not to even think about coming near me again.

* * *

"In '37—no, it was in '36, in late '36—Araquistáin called me to Paris, to the embassy, to work in the Information Service. I took *Tierra sin pan* with me. Araquistáin paid for it to be sonorized in French and in English—it's never been dubbed in Spanish. It was premiered at the end of '37 [actually '36] in the Omnia Pathé, on the Boulevard des Italiens."

"Is it true that you took money to Münzenberg for the government?"[81]

"Arias, from the Ministry of War in Madrid, asked me to. It was in August of '36: 'I know you're going to Paris. Will you do me a favor and take these four-hundred pounds and give them to Münzenberg?'"

"Then, you weren't sent by the government, by the ministry?"

"No, well, kind of. When Arias found out I was leaving, he had me called. Apparently, he didn't have a trustworthy agent, so he 'asked' me, and he gave me a code in case I needed to get in touch."

"So, you left…."

"September fourth. And I went back five times during the war. To Barcelona, to Madrid, to Valencia."

"Short trips."

"There and back. To deliver a report, carry mail. But if they'd told me I had to stay…."

"They did."

"You're right, but I told Araquistáin: 'I'll do whatever you want, but I think I'm more useful here in Paris.' And it was true. Not many of us knew the people in Paris the way I did. They love me there. It's my second homeland."

"You, who shit on all of those patriotic allegiances."

"Of course. And on the family, and on religion, and on flags, and on Spain and on the U.S.S.R."

"It's true. But not on your family, nor on Spain, nor on the U.S.S.R."

"Yes, on the U.S.S.R. too. Even though it's the only country that fights against that piece of shit that is North America, but I would never live in Moscow no matter what they offered me, and in New York I would and very happily. Anyway, laugh all you want, but no matter what you say, I really was the head of protocol in Paris. Well, not officially. But I was the one who decided who would sit where at the banquets, who made sure that nobody sat Aragon next to Gide."

"Finkie Araquistáin got mad when I told him. He insisted that his father had been ambassador in Berlin and that he knew the politics and the people in Paris well enough that he didn't need you to tell him where they should sit."

"Yes, but I wasn't just at the embassy with his father. I was there with Ossorio and with Pascua too. That Pascua … with his dog and his awful manners. He shut himself in—I've found out since then—with some young fellow or other, and there was no way to get through to him. He felt so superior. That's why I left."

"Have you ever belonged to the French Communist Party?"

"No, no, no. I've never belonged to the Party."

"To the Spanish one."

"One time I attended a meeting of the Spanish Party in Paris—there was a cell at the embassy in Paris during the war—to figure out what to do about a socialist son-of-a-bitch who was a secretary at the embassy and who was making things hard for us."

"And the group didn't do anything?"

"I don't remember."

"How about the French Party?"

"I didn't belong to that one either."

"So, what Aragon says…."

"Well, if Aragon says it…."

"And Thirion too."

"He was the most politicized of all. When I joined the surrealist group, each one pulled me aside individually to say, 'Be careful with Thirion. He's a politician. He's here to tell the Party what we do.' He wound up being a Gaullist councillor even before de Gaulle got back in power. According to Sadoul, it's his fault that the metro fares went up."[82]

"But you were part of the group with Aragon that was taken to task by the Party in 1931 and 1932."

"Right. There were six of us: Unik, Aragon, Alexandre—Maxime—who became a Catholic later on, Sadoul and I."

"Who else? Thirion?"

"No, not Thirion. He agreed with the Party. I don't remember who, but there was one more [it was the sculptor Alberto Giacometti, see 276*n*41]. Thirion always followed the Party line. But I wasn't a member. I went to a cell meeting one time. One time! And I didn't go back. It was too boring. Now, it's true: I was close to them, because they're right. They're the only ones who are. Somewhere in the archives of the North American bureaucracy, there's a file with the interview they gave me when I got to the U.S. in '38: 'Are you a communist?' 'No. But I have many friends who are; the Communist Party is the only one that is really fighting for the people of Spain.' 'Do you swear you're not?' 'Yes, I swear it.'" (He raises his hand.)

"The thing is, they relied on me. Before the war, when the Republican government was harrassing the Party, I seized *Mundo Obrero* ["Workers' World," a communist publication]. I had a big bank account then, because I was making a lot of money with Filmófono. The government was going to seize *Mundo Obrero.* So I went down and seized it first, pretending they owed me a certain sum of money. Once it had been seized by one person, it couldn't be seized by another. I helped them out quite a few times, but I'm not going to tell you about all that, because I'm not like some people. But I collected different sums of money every month at the embassy, for one thing or another. I played a part in the incident of the Condor Legion's bombs, and the business about that Hapsburg fellow, and another about that Bosch, a Cuban."[83]

"Argentine."

"No, Cuban. The one you say wanted to kill March [presumably Juan March, said to be the richest man in Spain at the time, and a Franco supporter], but he didn't have anything at all to do with that business."

"It must have been a different guy, an anarchist."

"Yes, a man the Minister of Governance totally trusted. He was sent to Pamplona. The minute he got to the front, he switched sides and gave them all sorts of useful information. What a guy! He became a captain in the Carlist militia![84] Later he wound up committing suicide in Chile. Mantecón told me."

"That was different person. People really get things confused."

"You too."

"Maybe so."

"Ogier was the one who sent me to Paris. He said, 'Go on. You'll be more useful to us there. We'll be there in a couple of weeks.' That's when Arias called me and gave me the four-hundred pounds for Münzenberg. I handed them over to Otto Katz, in front of Münzenberg, to give to a German who had a clean record. We were sending him to Burgos by way of Portugal."[85]

* * *

"I also got mad at Sánchez Ventura. Or, rather, he got mad at me. He lent me eight-hundred dollars, in '38, to go to North America, and then a thousand more. The money was essential, because I had nothing. Later on he wrote me from Mexico, saying he was broke and to please return the money. I asked how much it cost to live there, and people told me sixty dollars. So every month I sent him his sixty dollars. I have all the receipts upstairs.[86] I wasn't making much money—two-hundred dollars a week—and I had to pay for the apartment and support my family. He started to tell people that I was drinking champagne and leaving him in poverty. The bit about the champagne was wrong; I drank whiskey. But I think I sent him enough to live on. And I gave him back every last cent. Later, when I moved to Mexico, I ran into him on Avenida Juárez. He started to just keep going, but then he turned around and held out his hand. We hugged each other. And now.…

"The strangest things happen with friends. Think about Ugarte. I took him everywhere. He learned about film thanks to me. I got him to Hollywood. They asked me for somebody who could translate documentaries. I recommended Eduardo. They sent a telegram to the embassy to speed up the process, and later he started saying that he was the only Spaniard who'd gotten his immigration visa in two days. But I've got to admit he was a hard worker.

They were all happy with him. He did what needed to be done. Of course, as far as ideas go, he didn't have any of his own."

"No, he didn't know how to write, but he knew his technique."

"He told me one thing I'll never forget. We were making an adaptation of something or other, and he said, 'We must never announce what's going to happen. We must never say: "I'm going to the ball to see such-and-such a girl," but just move directly to the ball and show it.' He was really good for that kind of thing."

"But he was an odd duck."

"Well, yes, but useful and loyal. We were great friends. But you're right: he was very peculiar."

* * *

"I'm a great admirer of the North American bureaucracy. All of it. When we had to go sign up for the war, North Americans and foreigners too, because all of us had to sign up, I got to the place—it was a film theater—and saw the line. It circled the block three times. There's nothing that bothers me more than waiting. I'll go to the movies, and if there are twenty people in line, I'll take off. I won't wait. But this time I said to myself, 'Luis, there's no choice; you'll just have to put up with it. You've got to do it. Calm down, hold on.' Can you believe that twenty minutes later I was at the entrance? We went in in groups of a hundred, and there, on the stage, about four-hundred kids were seated, typing away. It was amazing. And all of it is like that."

"My daughter was in Oberlin as an assistant professor and…."

"Oberlin? Like Juan Luis! I'll have to tell him."

"He already knows. Anyway, she met the fellow there that she married, and they came here by car. When they passed the border, she didn't get out. I don't know what happened, but the thing is that they didn't stamp her passport. Years later my wife went to the United States, to San Antonio, just across the border, with some friends to shop for clothes. And they wouldn't let her enter, because she had a daughter who had disappeared mysteriously from the United States! I swear it's true."

"Didn't I tell you it's amazing? But it also has its bad side. Now they won't let me in unless I tell them what day, what flight, how long I'll be there, what I'm going to do."

"But you at least know why."

"Because Juanito Rejano had the great idea of putting me on the list of honorary directors of *España y la paz* [Spain and peace] that everybody signed."[87]

"Not me."

"Me neither. But Juanito put me on it. And that son of a…." (He laughs when he thinks about it.)

"But you at least know why. My situation is much more impressive"—Aub insists—"because I don't even know why. They used to give me a visa without any problem. Now, for the last three or four years, I'm in the same boat as you are."

"No way!"

"But I'm telling you, I am! The last time I was In New York I ran into the kids who were going to Nancy for the drama contest—they won it with *Divinas palabras*. Juan Ibáñez was right behind me.[88] When they saw me, the immigration people looked in their black book. The bureaucrat took off running; he came back with his boss. 'Wait a moment, please.'

You know the drill. To sum it up, I lost my first-class seat on the plane. They must have thought, 'This one isn't going to make it on board,' and they sold my seat to somebody else. I was going to Cannes, invited by the French. Ibáñez heard the boss say, 'Treat him with respect.' Now, it's the same story. I wanted to go through New York on my way to Europe, but since I didn't know the exact day or the flight, it was, 'Come back when you know.' Come back? I'll travel by Iberia [Airlines], and that's an end to it."

"Of course. That's what I did too."

"In spite of all that, long live the North American bureaucracy?"

"Of course!"

"Actually [Aub qualifies] I'm not so sure about that. I want them to tell me why. You know the police as well as I do. There are lots of people who live off what they get for informing, whether they tell the truth or make up lies. It drives me crazy."

"It doesn't bother me."

"God bless you then."

"Let's hope he hears you."

* * *

"Okay. I'll tell you what happened when I left Madrid [4 September 1936]. At the border I ran into Bergamín, Imaz and Muñoz Suay, who were in charge of about fifteen students on their way to a conference [in Geneva]. Bergamín told me in that little voice of his, 'they'll make you go to Barcelona, like they did us, to get a pass from the CNT.[89] I didn't have any money on me except for a few pesetas, but I did have a platinum necklace that had belonged to my parents and the four-hundred pounds for Münzenberg. When we got off the train, an anarchist with his beard and the usual red and black handkerchief stopped us. They were holding a sort of CNT court. I had an ordinary passport and a letter of recommendation from *Mundo Obrero.* 'That's no good.' 'What do you mean no good?'—I let out a couple of curses. 'Who do you think you are? You're worse than the cops!'—more curses: 'What do you mean no good? You're worse than the Civil Guard! Go fuck yourselves!' 'Okay, okay, friend. The trouble is, we get a load of fascists trying to cross the border here.' And I was the first one to get through. I swear."

* * *

"During the war, we sent copies of papal encyclicals—imagine, me!—of the *Rerum Novarum,* to Spain, thousands and thousands of copies, with the complicity of the French Communist Party, using German sailors as mules. With the Germans you could come to terms, but not with the Italians. All of the Italian sailors, even the civilians, were fascists, and there was no way to work out a deal with them. When the *Rerum Novarum* was published in 1937, it was hushed up in the rebel zone, because it had some bad things to say about the Reich, so we decided to pay for an edition of five thousand copies to disseminate it in Franco's territory. We chose a German boat that was sailing from a Belgian port to carry the propaganda. I took the stuff to Antwerp and turned it over to the head of the dockers there…."[90]

"And what can you tell me about the potassium?"

"That bothers me. How do you know about it? How did you find out?"

"I swear I don't remember. Somebody told me. It's in my little book of notes, I have

here: 'What did Buñuel have to do with the business about the potassium and Negrín?'[91] I talked to so many people during those seven months in Europe, so many different people, that I don't remember who mentioned it to me."

"I don't want you to say anything about that business."

"What happened?"

"Nothing happened. That's why. I think it was Ossorio who told me that the president of the Council was very interested in finding out what sort of trade there was in potassium between Spain and Germany. So I asked a guy who was working in some kind of commercial service—I don't even remember what it was now—to tell me what sort of cargos were being shipped. I swear I don't know if it was from Spain to Germany or from Germany to Spain. But he gave me the details, and I passed them on to the ambassador. The ambassador must have sent the information on to Negrín. Time passed. After a while, I asked Ossorio: 'What happened about the potassium?' And he answered: 'Everything's fine; the president was very satisfied.' That's all I know."

"One day, coming out of the office on the Boulevard de la Madeleine…"

"Right, the Tourist Office."

"…I ran into Edgar Neville. I invited him to go for a drink in an English bar that was near there, a clubby sort of bar, lots of wood, horse brasses, a pub. 'What are you doing here?' I asked him. 'I'm on my way to Burgos.' I froze. I hadn't seen him in a long time, probably a few years, but we had started out as writers at about the same time, and I remembered him as a Republican conspirator."[92]

"He was in our embassy in London. Pérez de Ayala might have had him called, or Azaña.[93] After about three months, he had gotten all the codes and all the papers, and then he took off for the Franco side."

* * *

"I brought Vicens to Paris, and Lacasa[94] and Ugarte. They were scared to death. What good would they done in Spain? But in Paris, they were brilliant. They brought Alberti—I didn't know him then.[95] I never knew him well, Alberti with that face like a bricklayer. Now that they've revived *Litoral* in Málaga, they asked me to write a piece on him for the magazine. I did, saying what I've just said: that I hardly knew him."

* * *

"I'm in favor of dictatorships. Whatever they say. Since man is evil—apart from a few good moments—a dictatorship is the only effective way to govern. That's why I was a Stalinist, and I still am even though all my communist friends get upset about it. Last year, in Paris, at Carrière's, they even threw me out.[96] Of course, I came right back. I think Stalin didn't have any choice but to govern the way he did, no matter who got killed, because he had to defend himself from a hundred-thousand tricks, and ambushes and betrayals. Sometimes I feel remorseful because I might have been responsible for the execution of the Russian commercial attaché in Paris in '37. Araquistáin gave me a letter that had been sent to him from the Ministry of Propaganda or Public Education, I don't remember which. In it, Manuel Colino, who was the head of the film section, or at least the news section (and, by the way, he did a terrific job), was complaining that only a tiny percentage of the films that Karmen and the other three Soviet cameramen shot on the fronts had reached Madrid. I

went to have a word with that attaché. There was nobody in the entrance room. He made me wait over half an hour. He finally saw me, but he didn't get up from his desk, and the first thing he did was ask me, 'Why aren't you at the front?' I was taken aback. 'I'm here on behalf of the Spanish government'—and I handed him my diplomatic passport, showing that I was an attaché at the embassy—'to ask why the films the Soviet cameramen are shooting are not being sent to Spain.' 'I don't have to explain anything to you. The only thing I want to know is why you aren't at the front.' And he stood up, putting an end to the interview. It made me so furious that I wrote a letter and sent copies to Araquistáin, the French Communist Party, Álvarez del Vayo [the Minister of Foreign Affairs] and Wenceslao Roces. A few months later, they called him back to Moscow and shot him. That business of the Moscow trials gave rise to a lot of arguments. Did you know that Marshal Tukhachevsky was Elsa's brother-in-law?"[97]

"No. They never told me about that."

"Back then I saw Aragon a lot. Not now. A few years ago, when Sadoul was still alive, we had dinner at his house. I don't think I've ever eaten so much caviar. Big, gray caviar. It was wonderful."

"Just like the caviar we thought we'd eat today." (We both laugh.)

* * *

"Three months later I went back to Paris and told Pascua, who was ambassador then, that I was fed up and that the business with the balloons was a waste of time. In Hollywood, at that point, they were making movies in favor of the Spanish republic, but they were full of awful mistakes. For example, they had heard that people drank from wine skins, but instead of showing regular *botas*, they were using these enormous skins from whole calves. So I came up with the idea—I suggested it to both Pascua and Vayo—of going to Hollywood as an advisor and doing it for free. They thought it was a great idea. Maybe it was a question of those premonitions that you've talked about. Ione Robinson, who was the mistress of Quintanilla and also of the North American Secretary of the Treasury,[98] lent me a hundred-thousand francs, and Sánchez Ventura gave me, I think, fourteen-hundred dollars—his savings—on the condition that I return the money when I could. He had realized, like me, that the conflict couldn't last much longer, and he figured his money would be safer in the United States. I've already told you that, little by little, I gave it all back to him. I have all the documents on it in my safe.

"I got to Hollywood after spending eight days with my friend Centeno in Princeton,[99] and I went to see Frank Davis, a communist, who was going to make a film called *Blockade* that would be the story of how a North American ship saved a bunch of children who were stuck in Bilbao when it was under siege.[100] But two days after I got there, the Film Center in Washington decided that no films should be made either in favor of or opposed to the Republic. And so I was left without a job. Because in Hollywood I had been on the black list since 1931"—as we've seen, this was not actually the case—"you already know the story about my stay there and my refusal when Thalberg wanted me to see a film Lily Damita was making, etc. etc. The North Americans have never forgotten any of that.

"So, by 1939 I was living from hand-to-mouth until, in January or February, Dick Abbott, the vice-president of the Museum of Modern Art showed up with his wife, Iris Barry. I knew Iris from London, from the days of surrealism. She knew all about me. Her

first husband, Mortimer, who was also a communist, was the president of an important film trust. Georges Anteuil, a North American musician who was a friend of mine, took me to see them. I owe Iris a lot. It's because of her that I didn't starve to death.[101] I had used up the money I'd taken with me, and there was no way at that point for my family to send me money. I went back to New York with Nino Veber, who had been a pilot in the First World War and was the son of a French playwright, who was still famous at the time….[102] We didn't know what to do with ourselves. We were looking for jobs. There was another musician with us: Edgard Varèse. He's made it now. We went all over. We even asked Janet Alcoriza's father, who was famous for his film music and as an orchestra director, for work."

"Well, all that was in Hollywood. In New York we read the list of job offers, the list they used to post on the street beneath the El. We were up for anything: to work as laborers, as drivers, as whatever came along. I ran into a Catalonian there, Galí, whom I knew from Hollywood. He had been in the United States since 1934, and he made a fortune in tires, the kind with a tread. He told me in that accent that was as strong as ever: 'I'm going to find you a job. Look, go to the French restaurant on 49th Street. You'll meet So-and-So there. He's the boss of all the cooks in New York. Well, he's a gangster, but he's the boss. Tell him I sent you and to give you a good job at the Sheraton.' He gave me his card, but I didn't go. I was living in Iris's house. I had my room there. They brought me breakfast in bed, and on the nights they didn't go out, I had dinner too."

"The Second World War had broken out. Veber had gone off to fight with de Gaulle, and Iris, who had a real nose for trouble, had gotten Leni Riefenstahl's films out of Europe—the one on the Nurenberg Congress and another on the invasion of Poland. She and her husband were close friends of the Rockefellers, and they played the film for him at the museum so he'd realize the role film could play as a weapon of propaganda. The Yankees knew absolutely nothing about that sort of thing. Rockefeller was very impressed, so they decided to create a film section in the Museum of Modern Art.[103] Even before they did it, I started work on *The Triumph of the Will.* It was twelve reels long, and there were another twelve reels on the conquest of Poland. With a German girl, who helped me with continuity on the speeches, I cut it down by half. You know the rest of the story: they got so scared that, after ordering eighteen copies for the Spanish American countries, they decided not to use it for fear that the level of brutality and the show of force would be counterproductive."

"You'll be surprised to hear that last night on television, in a series about the history of Hollywood—this was a chapter on Hollywood and social films—they showed long sequences from what had to be the version you edited."

"I'm sure that in American embassy film archives there are copies of that film. I was in the museum until '44 [actually 1943] when I went to Hollywood as the head of the Spanish film department at Warner Brothers, because they were planning to make Spanish and French versions of the war movies they shot in those years. But they soon realized that it was going to cost a lot to shoot remakes with Spanish and French actors, and they decided to dub them instead. That's how I became the head of the dubbing department at Warner Brothers with thirty-four employees to boss around, including Alfonso Vidal y Planas" [a Spanish playwright].

"Who died in California a couple of years ago. Did you know him from before?"

"Of course. We even had a banquet in his honor, in 1921 I think, when he premiered *Santa Isabel de Ceres* ['St. Elizabeth of Ceres'] at the Teatro Eslava."

"A nice comedy."

"Well, I don't know about that. But back then showing respectful, saintly whores was considered incredibly daring. Besides, he was an anarchist, and that was enough to make us take his side. He was a hairy, nasty sort of fellow. But it didn't matter. Rafael Sánchez Ventura, Eurgenio Montes and all the Ultraístas who were in Madrid then attended. When I was in Hollywood, I also lured José Rubia Barcia to work with me."

"Who's written a few very good books."

"Right. He works on Valle-Inclán. He was an adjunct professor at the university. And Jacqueline Sadoul, the daughter of that famous French sailor who staged an uprising on the Black Sea, she was there too."[104]

"Do you have premonitions?"

"Yes."

"And you leave Spain in 1936, and leave France in 1938, and the United States…. Are we talking about that kind of premonition?"

"Maybe so. I had good reason to worry about Hollywood. In '44 they [the FBI] came to check up on things. As usual, I had a few firearms. I had to go register them. The employee asked me: 'Are you North American?' When I told him I wasn't, he looked shocked and refused to register the guns. He told me to get a North American friend to register them for me. I went to see the manufacturer, and he refused to do it, since I was a foreigner. Thanks to Payne, who was a communist, a friend of mine and the governor's secretary [unidentified], things were taken care of. But about that time, he began to get rid of all the Marxist books he had. 1944. If something tells me to go, I get out."

"When I started work at the Museum of Modern Art, they had very grand plans: we were going to make one documentary after another. With Nelson Rockefeller backing us, everything would be easy. Later, there was no money, and we spent all our time translating the films into Spanish. The Riefenstahl thing came out beautifully. They made eighteen copies in Spanish, for all the embassies in Spanish America, but then the order came down not to show it. One day, Iris Barry, the curator, decided to show it to Chaplin and René Clair. Bad people. She asked me what I thought of the idea, and I answered that I wouldn't take responsibility for whatever happened, that it was up to her. She would be in charge, because I'd been told to forget about the film. But the film is good."

"This is the first time I've ever heard you speak well of one of your works."

"Because it's good. It's good. Anyway, they projected it. Chaplin nearly died laughing. Chaplin is an awful person. He was laughing so hard that at one point he nearly fell out of his seat. Clair, on the other hand, had turned pale by the end of the projection. 'Don't show it,' he said. Confronted with that exhibition of Hitler's force, he obviously felt there was no way to win the war. But Chaplin, who'd been a good friend of mine in Hollywood in the thirties, nearly died laughing. I don't know if that happened before or after *The Great Dictator.*[105] Four rolls of speeches and marches, all carefully edited, and six of the invasion of Poland. An attaché who deserted got the original films out of the German embassy. He filched them, just for the hell of it. We were told to keep the work secret, and we did. There must be a copy of the film in the North American embassy here [in Mexico]. I'd like to see it again."

"Don't you think somebody would object?"

"The one who really objected was the representative of the Catholics in Washington,

who, back then, weren't so numerous and so influential as they are now. Mr. Prendergast was the one who got things moving. He read Dalí's book, and he started talking and getting in touch with people. When I handed in my resignation, it turned out that they'd been putting pressure on the museum to get rid of me for eight months. Miss Barry told me to stick it out, to kick up a fuss, but the truth is that I'll retract anything if I can help a friend out that way. What the devil do I care if by writing a letter saying that surrealism was a movement that respected the law and fell within the norms of behavior, if in that way I can save my friend Iris Barry's position? Iris, who had treated me royally, and done so much for me! Some of the surrealists reproached me for it, but I told them to go to hell. I still had my surrealist ideas, just like I do now, but it didn't bother me at all to write an official letter, which wasn't entirely truthful, to do a big favor for someone who had been a magnificent friend to me. I did it, and it doesn't weigh on my conscience. And I would do it again. It's true that Dalí didn't denounce me as a communist, but in his dirty little book he *did* say that his profound respect for the Church and the Christian religion kept him from working seriously on *L'Âge d'or,* a blasphemous, impious film."[106]

* * *

Tierra sin pan is like most documentaries in that it calls attention to the most picturesque and tragic elements of a situation. It's about Spain, and Buñuel used it to make his political position clear. Remember that it was filmed in March and April of 1933. It went beyond politics. In view of the wars that would follow, it may not seem like a lot, but we have to bear in mind the time and the place where it was filmed, without even touching on the cinematic quality of a sort of reality that appears for the first time in Buñuel's work. In spite of the eighteen years that intervened, it leads us directly to *Los olvidados* [*Los Olvidados/The Forgotten Ones*].

After *Un Chien andalou, L'Âge d'or* and *Tierra sin pan,* it's easy to understand why Buñuel felt he had nothing left to say with his camera. He goes back to Paris. Thanks to the scandals caused by his first two films, it's easy for him to find well-paid work in North-American companies that take pride in contracting anyone whose work defies the norm as long as he will submit to the dictates of commercial production. Luis Buñuel will work for Warner Brothers, Paramount and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, doing whatever they require [he was involved in dubbing at this point] so that he can live in luxury—even though he doesn't need that money.

He develops sciatica, which immobilizes him for almost three months. During this time, he rereads almost the complete works of Carlos Arniches. He finds them really funny, and—settled once more in Madrid, married and a father—he goes to see his friend Ricardo Urgoiti and asks him if he has seen or read *Don Quintín, el amargao.* He puts a check for one hundred thousand pesetas on the table and tells him, "Put the same amount in." That's the birth of Filmófono. Up until the war starts, they'll make four films (we'll see how) and a lot of money. Luis Buñuel's career as a filmmaker has ended. Film now is a way to make a living, a way to do something because he doesn't like being idle, but he doesn't see any way to make something that really satisfies him.

All of this happened after he shot *Tierra sin pan* and then returned to Paris, where he ran into his old friend Claudio de la Torre. He told Claudio that, after *Tierra sin pan,* he didn't want to make any more films, and Claudio, always so elegant, so English, offers him

a job dubbing for Paramount for three-hundred francs a day. He gives in to temptation. He works with Marlene Dietrich's husband, and—most important—he learns English.

The next year, in November, Juan Luis is born, and Warner Brothers, which has already lured him away from Paramount, sends him to Madrid as a supervisor of their dubbing department. This leaves him with almost nothing to do, except fret about the events in Asturias and suffer from sciatica.[107] He gives birth to Filmófono.

Urgoiti accepts his offer. Buñuel is credited as Executive Producer of *Don Quintín.* Eduardo Marquina is paid 2,000 pesetas as director. Ugarte has taken care of the adaptation, or part of it; he's as strange as ever, coming and going with Federico García Lorca and *La Barraca,* and is, as usual, suffering from his frustrated love affairs. When the film is done, Buñuel decides to retire.[108]

But now something has to be done about *La hija de Juan Simón* [*Juan Simón's Daughter*]. It's under the direction of Sobrevila, an architect from Bilbao who takes fifteen days to shoot a scene. Urgoiti is desperate. He calls Buñuel for help. Then, for a thousand pesetas, José Luis Sáenz de Heredia agrees to direct *¿Quién me quiere a mí?* ["Who Loves Me?"]. And suddenly we're in 1936. Arniches joins two of his own works and comes out with *¡Centinela, alerta!* [Sentinel, on guard!]. Urgoiti and Buñuel decide to make it a more ambitious film, and Buñuel writes to Jean Grémillon, who agrees to direct the film for fifteen-thousand pesetas. Unfortunately, just after he gets to Madrid, he develops a terrible toothache, and Buñuel and Ugarte find themselves at work again. On July 18 with Grémillon back in France, Buñuel is editing the film.

"How did you feel then [in Madrid, at the outbreak of the Civil War]?"

"Scared to death. I didn't belong to any party, to any labor union.[109] I like firearms, but what I like is taking them apart and putting them back together again, cleaning them. At most, going hunting. But being fired at, oh no. I didn't play a part in those famous days at the beginning of the war. I went to the cafés, to the Alianza de Intelectuales Antifascistas. They gave me an identification card from the UGT and a pass from *Mundo Obrero,* saying: 'Comrade Luis Buñuel sympathizes with our ideas.' Sender, who had gone to the front for five minutes, insulted us all in the café. They got their own back later when he took off running. Pepín Bello was a defeatist. I remember Elie Faure in his shorts, in a hotel right in the middle of the Gran Vía, crying. As I was telling you, we used to go to the Alianza de Intelectuales which in those days was a little past the Lista area. Cotapos and Claudio were there, Claudio de la Torre, who didn't know that Mercedes, Mercedes Ballesteros, his wife, daughter of the professor who flunked me in history, was a Centurion in the Falange.[110] I think they took shelter in an embassy. I was there until I went to Paris as the head of protocol at the embassy, with Juanito Vicens and later with Sánchez Ventura. That whole question of information…. The one who really worked hard was García Ascot. He even spent his own money on it. And Araquistáin was a great ambassador! Ossorio, after him, wasn't up to much, and then we had Doctor Pascua, who never cared about anything but his dog."

"Do you remember Ogier?"

"Of course. Ogier Preteceille. A good person."

"I used to know him, years and years ago, in Valencia. He worked on *El Pueblo* ['The People'], Blasco Ibañez's newspaper. He must have gotten to Valencia around 1913. He was very young, but he already was part of the 'bande à Bonnot' [a legendary French anarchist gang]. It's strange that, later on, in 1960 when the French translation of *Campalans* was

coming out, Rirette Maitrejean, who corrected the proofs, saw that she herself was in the novel. I went over to talk to her, and Ogier came out in the conversation, so I called him."

"Oh! If I only knew where he lives…."

"I don't know what you'd do. I talked to him. He's blind. I was so horrified that I didn't go to see him."

"I would have gone. But not if he'd been paralyzed."

"It's strange how you live two lives. In your films, you hate the blind, not the paralytics."

"I hadn't noticed."

"People say you edited *España leal en armas* ['Loyalist Spain Up In Arms']."

"All I did was supervise the editing done by Jean-Paul Dreyfus—who's now known as Jean-Paul le Chanois—of the material that the sub-Secretary of Propaganda sent us."[111]

"A guy named Colino."

"That was the one, in '37. Araquistáin paid, with his money, for the sonorization of *Tierra sin pan* [as we've seen this wasn't the case] and it was premiered and was a big success. The last thing I did for them was the project of the balloons and the encyclicals. The idea of the balloons came from Fisher, an Austrian. [He repeats the story about his being more use in Hollywood as an adviser, this time adding that he refused to let the Republican government pay him for his trip or his work there—it's clear there was actually no offer to pay.] When I got to Hollywood, they called me up for the draft. I wrote to Cruz Marín, who was a minister at the embassy in Washington, to ask him what to do, and he told me to wait or, rather, to wait for further orders. Of course, they never came, so I stayed there in Hollywood, with no money and no possibility of getting any from my family. I called on my friends for help. Then I ran into Iris Barry and Georges Anteuil, and because of them, I went to New York as a director of documentary films [in the OIAA] at the Museum of Modern Art.

[He speaks again about editing Riefenstal's two documentaries.] "That's when I got to know Gustavo Durán and Gustavo Pittaluga. Gustavo Durán was 'assistant associated' and 'chief editor,' no less.[112] We had to make and dub documentaries. Our boss was a great guy: Kenneth Macgowan. But Rockefeller had the last word on everything.

"I remember two incidents that were pretty funny. One of the documentaries was about agriculture and the other about steel making. In the first one, five Latin American students appeared: an Argentine, a Venezuelan, a Chilean, a Uruguayan, and I don't know who else, who were working in the fields with great results, because they were following the instructions of their teachers. We had to get rid of it. I asked why. 'We don't want them to learn and then think that they can do the same thing on their own.' That's what they told me. The steel-making film was a lot easier: they suppressed it for the same reason. Don't let them think for a minute that they can put up blast furnaces all over. No way!"

* * *

"I got to Madrid, as I told you, the day of the attack on Dato…. The taxi driver took me to see the bullet holes. Casanellas, Mateu … and who else?" [see 264*n*14].

"I don't remember."

"It was in March. Don't you remember that in 1920 there was an attempted uprising instigated by soldiers?"

"No. What I remember—imagine!—is my draft group, the one that had to fight at Annual.[113] There was real poverty back then."

"Poverty, real destitution, we all found out about it in books, in Russian literature, in the Russian writers published by the Universal Collection. It's strange that at that time, let's say from '17 on, what impressed us about Russia wasn't the Revolution—we didn't know and didn't care about it—but the writers, who came out in decent translations in the collection that Ortega directed. Not just Gorky and Andreyev, but lots of others, without even counting Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. At least that's the way I found out about poverty, because in my mind the Russian Revolution didn't even exist until 1928, when I got interested in surrealism. There was another sort of poverty that I experienced almost from the time I reached Madrid, but I didn't give it much importance because it just meant running out of money, which isn't exactly the same, even though people like Pedro Garfías made a big show of not having a peseta because his parents had forgotten to send his stipend, or some other dodge like that. I remember clearly that around 1918 or 1919, probably '19, Garfías and Eugenio Montes lived in a boarding house, a guest house, on Humilladero, number 7, where they got a room and three meals a day for four pesetas. True, it wasn't much of a room; it was an attic—I can still picture it—with two beds and just one little window, way up on top, for ventilation. Eugenio Montes, who was so clean and neat later on, was lying in bed wearing a tee-shirt that was black with dirt and had two bedbugs on it. I picked up one of them and flattened it on the floor. I had gone there early, because we'd agreed to take a walk around that part of town. It must have been ten or eleven in the morning. It was around the time of *Ultra*—before *Horizonte*.[114] It was incredible how much Eugenio changed after those days! We had been close friends, and also friends with Giménez Caballero, but they both seemed to flourish under Franco. Giménez Caballero used to go every night or so to El Pardo [Franco's retreat]. The two of them were seen as Franco's counselors. Ernesto would tell him, 'I think this, or I think that.' Of course, afterwards, Franco would do what he damn well pleased. And look where they've wound up. Montes has been a cultural attaché or something like that in Lisbon or Rome for the last twenty years, and Giménez Caballero is the eternal ambassador to Paraguay."[115]

* * *

"I don't think Sender has ever told how, around 1918, he worked for an editor in Barcelona, writing a weekly comic book that was called *Cocoliche y Tragaviento.* The characters' names [which were nonsensical, but comic] became famous in Spain. The editor didn't pay him anything for the first few issues, but for the fourth he sent him a hundred pesetas. With that, Sender bought himself a pipe, tobacco and a pair of pajamas and went to the Hotel Inglés—you remember where it was, don't you? He took one of the best rooms and didn't come out of it for the two days it took to spend his capital. I love that story. Around that time, one morning when I was on my way to class, at seven or eight o'clock, back when I was planning to be an agricultural engineer, I saw him. It was raining. He was sitting on a bench … with his hat on, but sound asleep. I woke him up and asked him, 'What are you doing here?' 'Nothing. I walked around all night long.' I gave him two pesetas so he could get breakfast. He was an odd soul. The thing about rain reminds me that the two days he was at the Hotel Inglés it was raining, and he spent his time by the window, watching the rain.

* * *

"Miguel Primo de Rivera saved me from the war in Morocco. My father knew a senator. I don't remember his name. Primo de Rivera was Captain General of Madrid. The senator gave me a letter for him. He received me. I was embarrassed. He looked at me a little skeptically: 'And you, what are you up to?' 'Well, studying….' 'So, having a great time, eh? Okay, tell Esteban to talk to somebody in the First Light Artillery Regiment.' The First Light Artillery Regiment had just won a laurel for bravery, and it wouldn't go back to Morocco unless things got really bad. It never went back. I ran into Chabás there. He had also been saved."

"Talking about Chabás, did you know Dámaso [Alonso]?"

"Not much. I've already talked to you about him. One night he told me, 'Did you know that the painter fellow who's with you in the Residencia is a terrific poet?' He was talking about Alberti, who was painting some spirally things with gold that I liked a lot."

"They weren't very good."

"Maybe not, but I liked them. And even with the bad memory I have for that kind of thing, I remember those verses: 'La noche ajusticiada.' Eh? That's from way back!

> Night executed,
> on the gallows of a tree
> joys kneeling down,
> kiss her and anoint
> her sandals.

What memories!"

"But did you keep on avoiding the service?"

"I came very close to deserting. As I said, I joined the First Light Artillery of the Pacific, because they assured me that the regiment that had won the Laurels of San Fernando a few years before would definitely not be sent to Morocco (I was worried because I was part of the Annual generation). And, in fact, everything proceeded normally, and I say 'normally,' because I assume it was like that in all the garrisons. But, in spite of that, since I've never been in prison or in a concentration camp, the memories of the garrison and of school with the Jesuits (obedience, discipline) are things I've never forgotten.

"One morning, a sergeant told us that we were going to have the day off and that we should just show up for roll call, because the next day three of the artillery units were leaving for Morocco. I had already said that if I were sent to Morocco, I would desert. So I got to the Residencia and told everybody that the next day I would do it. There was a precedent. One of the residents, Rey Vigil, had deserted about twenty days before and crossed the frontier to Portugal with the help of Eugenio Montes. We went to see him off at the station, dressed in civvies. He got on a first-class car. Just by chance, a colonel in the Civil Guard got on with him. Big scare. He crossed the frontier near Vigo, riding a donkey and accompanied by his friend Eugenio Montes. They went through Orense, and that's when Montes, who was a great friend of mine, told me that everybody in Orense was crazy. There weren't any more than three soldiers in the Residence, and the third was ready to do the same thing. That's why don Alberto, who was obviously pretty worried, told me that it would be better to spend the day I was deserting somewhere else. Rey Vigil is working as an engineer now in Brazil. I'd probably be in the Amazon as an entomologist, like Cándido

Bolívar [his old teacher] wanted me to. The other soldier, Beltrán, was in the Army Engineers. But nothing happened. When they called roll, they told us that the order had been cancelled and that we wouldn't be heading out."

* * *

We are talking about jazz.

[Buñuel says,] "Of course we'd heard it. Maybe we didn't call it 'jazz' then. I think we did, but, no matter what we called it, the rhythm existed, the *tempo* of a music that was completely exotic for Spaniards who were used to the *pasodoble*, the *chotis*, the waltz, the *tuestén*, which the cocky guys—copying Arniches—called the 'two-step."

"I remember perfectly the first appearance of jazz in Valencia. I remember in the Olimpia Cinema … they presented the first drum kit we'd ever seen, and people stood up everywhere to see who was playing the drums."

"To see the drummer."

"Exactly."

"Well, I first saw that drummer in 1915. It was in San Sebastián. There wasn't any other jazz up until then. The first really good jazz orchestra that reached Madrid was in '23. At the Madrid Club, or something like that. I don't remember the place. The leader's name was Huntington. It was a group of blacks. They were magnificent, with an amazing drummer. And two years before, in San Sebastián, in '20 or '21, just after the World War had ended, when San Sebastián had the best beach in Europe, with a gambling casino and everything, there was a stupendous jazz group. I remember "The Limehouse Blues." I remember the piece so clearly: "The Limehouse Blues." That was in 1920. When it got to Saragossa, a little later, the rhythm was messed up. The syncopation—ti-ta-ta, tu-ta-ta-pa, for example—was off. But I've heard good jazz in San Sebastián, from 1916 on. Maybe they called it something else then. Sometimes it was a fox-trot, or a two-step…."

"Well, that's jazz."

"Two-step, two-step."

"Two step?"

"Two step, yes. The *tuestén*."

* * *

"I don't go out. I don't like to travel. If it was up to me, I'd spend my whole life is this room. I know Acapulco, Tuxpan and Guanajuato because of filming, because of work. I don't like reading long books either. They bore me. At least I don't like them any more."

"Well, as a young person you didn't like staying in your room. You were big on sports."

"Right. I became pretty good at throwing a javelin."

"Is it true that one time you almost killed somebody?"

"That's just a story. He hid behind a tree. I was a meter and a half away, and I threw the javelin against the trunk, which was pretty thick. Besides, the point of the javelin was bent."

"Bent, huh?"

"To tell the truth: when I was young, I was violent. One time—I must have been about nine—I wrote a note daring Fernando and Diego Madrazo both to fight me. They turned over the note to the prefect, and he sent it to my father along with my grades for the month, which, by the way, were pretty good. Federico always told me, 'You're a ruffian.' And it was

true. The only thing I wanted to do in the Residencia was play sports, every kind of sport. I got up very early, as I've always done, to run, practice gymnastics, throw the javelin, box, jump over things, all in my underwear. That's why sometimes, at nine at night, when we used to go to Emilio Prados's room, I would excuse myself and go to sleep. Federico would insult me. It was the hour when he'd start to read something to them, or recite, or play the piano, and I'd head off to bed. But, despite that, I owe Federico everything. I mean, without him, I'd never have known what poetry was. Even though, for him, there were two different worlds: ours and the world of the 'intelligent people'—Salinas, Guillén, Adolfo Salazar, Moreno Villa.[116] He kept us out of that world: 'No, tonight I'm going out with intelligent people.' Later, as time passed, things changed a bit. I was much closer to Dalí, to his way of thinking and everything, but I owe Federico much more. He showed me a much bigger world. Later on, we became good friends again. In October, Federico's father used to give him twenty duros to last to December. He spent them in three days with his friends on wine and tapas. Then he started giving him forty. The same thing happened. Federico got along by running up debts and sponging off his friends. And his father was very, very rich. People used to reproach him about it, but he would defend his family to the death: 'My father is the best person ever! My mother, even better! And Paquito—talk about talent! Jesus!' He sounded like a character out of a Quintero brothers' farce. 'And my sisters!' He was a great lyric poet and an incredible imitator: 'Play Schumann,' we'd tell him, and it sounded as though he were playing Schumann like an angel, but he was making it all up. As a dramatist, now, his work would make you throw up. But he could imitate anything, even surrealism."

"When was the death of the toucan?"

"We were looking for outside locations for *La Mort en ce jardin* [*Death in the Garden*]—in '55 or '56—around Lake Catemaco. The toucan was up in a tree, with its huge beak silhouetted against the sky. We were driving. I said to myself, 'I wonder if I can hit him.' I shot, and he dropped. I promised myself never to do it again."

"It's odd. That incident has given rise to a whole legend about your collection of firearms."

"It's true."

"But the story is that you only clean them; not just that you don't use them, but that you've never even fired them."

"That's ridiculous. I was a pretty good hunter. I always felt guilty, but I was a decent hunter."

"That's how myths are born: Buñuel has firearms; he likes them, but he doesn't use them. Then somebody who is bright or at least thinks he is makes his calculations and winds up discovering that you suffer from some peculiar complex."

"What's to be done? This happens to everybody. When I got to the Residencia, there wasn't a free room, so I shared a room with Augusto Centeno. He got up before me. He washed up in a blue basin, and then he combed his hair. But he only combed his hair in front; he never combed the back of his head. It drove me crazy, and I really hated him for it. Then one day, I let go: 'Comb the back of your head, you pig!' He was shocked. And just so you'll see, the woman who combs her hair in *El ángel exterminador* is only there as a remembrance of that scene with Centeno. So, they can say whatever they like."

"Did you ever get involved in hypnotism?"

"From the time I was twenty until I was twenty-three, very much so. One time, in I

don't remember what theater, there was a hypnotist who invited the public to go on stage and try to hypnotize the people who were up there. Another fellow and I got up on the stage. I looked at one of the other people on stage, I pointed a finger at him and said, 'Go to sleep.' And he fell asleep. Later, I undertook a lot of experiments with hypnotism and transmission of thoughts.[117] I was studying to be an engineer back then, and I used to get together with a group of medical students at Fornos. A lot of them are still alive. On my travels, I've seen some of them and heard about others. Most of them are doctors, about my age; one's a pharmacologist…. I was twenty. We used to go to the brothels on the calle de la Reina, back behind it."

"And the one on Jardines."

"Those were the cheap ones, ten pesetas. The good ones were on Huertas. There the madam looked you over carefully and asked for your name. 'And where are you from?' 'From Saragossa.' She would speak on the phone. Ten minutes later a girl would show up. 'Mercedes (or whatever her name was), this is señor Buñuel, a good friend.' And then: 'Will you wait outside for a minute?' But the most interesting thing, talking about hypnotism and that business, was on the Calle de la Reina. A very odd thing happened to me there. Teresita was the prettiest of the girls, and I hypnotized her and made her fall asleep although it took some work. But the strange thing was that her sister, who was really ugly, with a drooping eyelid that looked awful—she worked in the kitchen just next to Teresita's room—was a fabulous medium, and when I tried to put Teresita to sleep, the one who was affected right away was Rafaela, the sister."

"I imagine you haven't told this story in a long time. Breton certainly didn't know about it in the forties, when you saw each other in New York, because if he had, he would have made use of your sad Rafaela in relation to Brauner."[118]

"Maybe. She was obviously in love with me. She was a silent, ugly girl. Later she died in a hospital. I don't know which of the medical students told me about it. On the Calle de la Reina, number twenty-two. One night at the Residencia, I put the cashier to sleep. It was easy. Then I made him open the cash register and give me the money. When I tried to wake him up, I couldn't. It scared me a little. I took him up to my room, I think with Centeno. We stayed there speaking quietly until about half an hour later he began to stir, and I commanded him to wake up. He did at once. 'Ay, señor Buñuel; ay, señor Buñuel; you are something!' I gave him the money, and he took off running. We performed a lot of experiments. I put Emilio to sleep a bunch of times, but not Federico. He resisted. Then I got worried, and I stopped doing it."

"It's odd. There's no trace of all that in your films."

"It was the period when Vicens tried to convert me to theosophy. I read a lot of books about one thing and another. I've always been interested in the way writers relate to this type of extrasensory communication."

* * *

"The guys from Aragón have a lot of nerve. A kid from my town used to dress up as a priest during Holy Week; he'd get on the streetcar, take out a piece of bread filled with chorizo or some other sausage or ham and start devouring it, to the indignation of the women on board. 'In the monastery, we all do it,' he'd say, with his mouth full."

…

"Those of us who were friends at the Residencia were divided between the vegetarians, who followed Juan Vicens (Vicens was extremely health conscious) and those who were on my side, who were alcoholics. We played some pretty ferocious tricks on the other ones, especially about the question of tea, because they spent the whole day drinking tea, and we even put some marks on the container showing where the flood of tea had reached. Our favorite drink was rum, apart from the tea."

"Tell the truth. You went through a vegetarian period too with your radishes and lettuce."

"It's true. It was because of Vicens's influence, around 1919 or '20. Vicens was a vegetarian, a mason and a theosophist. Once he tried to get me to join a lodge. I thought it was a great idea. I like all those romantic sorts of thing. It was a lodge called Numantine Force. We went in, and we made the signs, but when the man saw my identity card, he said I couldn't join, because I was twenty, and you had to be twenty-one. I never went back."

"That's strange. The same thing happened to me. I went once too, so I could see what it was about. I've always thought there's a streak of wild romanticism in your work."

"Of course. What I've never been is liberal. It's my temperament. I like things this way and not that way. And I'll tell you again: when I close my eyes, I'm an anarchist, a nihilist, right up until I open them."

"What happened between you and the king at the Residencia?"

"That actually was true."

"True the way they told me? That you were stark naked, in a room on the first floor, and that you couldn't think of anything to do when you saw the king but grab a derby hat and put it on your head?"

"No. It's a shame, but that's not the way it happened. That would have been much more surrealistic, but no such luck. I was living on the second floor of the second pavilion. It was Sunday, and I was naked. I had just combed my hair, with a part in the middle, using a lot of brillantine, and so my hair wouldn't get messed up, I had put on a straw hat. At that minute, I heard people talking, and I looked out. From down below, they couldn't see anything except my head, and I was totally shocked to see the king, who had gotten out of a car and was talking to a doorman or someone like that. When I looked out, the king raised his eyes, saw me and asked me about something that sounded like 'the way to Chamberí.' I took off my hat and answered, 'Yes, your majesty.' I mumbled the 'majesty,' because I was as big a nihilist then as I am now, and I didn't like using the word, but I did it. The next day don Alberto Jiménez spoke to the king's secretary to apologize that nobody had been at the Residencia to help him and that 'his majesty' had spoken with a resident 'who was naked.' That's where the whole story must have gotten started."

"They tell a lot of tales about you from that time."

"They're probably telling only the half of it."

"That you dressed up as a…."

"I've used lots and lots of disguises, of all sorts."

"They say you dressed up as a priest."

"That's one I used. I did it most with Navaz.[119] We went out in all kinds of disguises, as country bumpkins, as laborers. Well, it was with Federico that I dressed as a laborer. We went all over dressed like that. I remember that we ran into Melchor Fernández Almagro and José de Ciria y Escalante—do you remember Ciria?—who were coming out of the Café

Regina, and we bumped into them hard.[120] I gave Melchor a push, and we started insulting them: 'Those filthy little gentlemen who don't watch where they're going.' They didn't recognize us. Imagine! Melchor didn't recognize Federico! Going around in a disguise is just fantastic! I've dressed up as everything. Even a soldier. In Doctor Pascua's uniform. Since Pascua was a doctor, or almost a doctor, he could wear the uniform of a second lieutenant in the medical corps. That must have been in '21 or '22, when I was serving as a gunner, with Chabás. If they caught me, I'd have been up for five years in jail. On the Calle de Alcalá I ran into two guys from my company. They didn't salute me, so I turned around and said, 'What does a soldier do when he sees an officer?' 'He salutes,' they said, standing at attention, very pale. 'Well then, present yourselves at the garrison; you're under arrest.' The next day, seeing the same soldier, I started cursing and shouting that I had come across a son-of-a-bitch medical officer on Alcalá and, because I hadn't seen him and hadn't saluted him, he had had me arrested.

"We put on disguises, at least in my case, to see society from another point of view. Dressed as laborers, unshaven, with a beret, a muffler and a dirty cover-all, people paid no attention to us. You'd go to a tobacco store, and they'd serve you last. You asked for matches, and they gave you the cheap ones without hesitating. In the street, girls didn't even see you. It's true: I also dressed up as a priest, and I got another cassock for Federico. I got them from a place on Corredera Baja where they rented out costumes for the theater. We had agreed to meet up at seven on plaza de Colón. He didn't show up. Time passed, and more time passed. There was a pair of Civil Guards making their rounds. I didn't know what to do. At seven-thirty, I couldn't take it anymore, so I went to the Residencia. Federico came in at eight-thirty and didn't say a word to me. Navaz and I did a lot of crazy things. He'd dress up as a country bumpkin, and I as the janitor at the Veterinary School. We'd go to restaurants. He'd eat a banana skin and all, and I'd make desperate gestures to everyone there: 'My cousin just got here from the village. He doesn't know any better.' On the street and on the streetcar, we'd carry on with the same idea, doing all sorts of nutty things. We'd even go to houses of sin. They'd open the peephole: 'Here's my cousin, who has come to see if he can….' They'd close the peephole. We'd knock again, and Navaz would take out a handkerchief and start knotting and unknotting it until he'd taken out two or three coins, and they'd shut the peephole on us again. Yes, I've dressed up a lot: as a janitor, as a doorman, but that's nothing compared to what Federico and Dalí did. One of the things they liked was swindling the South Americans, the diplomats. They'd touch them up for a hundred or two-hundred pesetas and then take off running."

"They were very close, Federico and Dalí."

"Very close. He was a much closer friend of Federico than I was. I was closer to Dalí than to Federico. I don't like Federico's work at all. His plays are really bad. I like some of the poetry, but not a lot. Where his real genius lay was as a person. I remember that one time, when I'd just gotten back from New York, he said, 'You're an ignoramous, and you don't understand a thing, but this guy will tell you what I've done.' And Dalí, in that Catalonian accent he's never lost, assured me that 'It's magnificent, just magnificent.' So, we agreed that Federico would read his *Don Perlimplín* to me. We got together in the basement of the Hotel Nacional. Do you remember? There was a sort of beer garden there."

"Yes, in what they used to call the 'stables.'"

"Right. So, Federico started reading. At the end of the first act, some character—I

don't know who—came out of the prompter's box, and I said: 'This is really bad.'[121] Federico got to his feet, very indignant: 'Dalí does not agree with your opinion. You're not worthy to be a friend of mine.' And turning to Dalí, he asked: 'Right?' But Dalí said, 'Well, it's not very good.' Then Federico gathered together his papers in a huff and left. We followed him, making a lot of noise so he'd hear us. He got to the church that's at the beginning of the Gran Vía, went in and fell to his knees with his arms outstretched. He was canny; he knew we were watching him. Dalí and I took off to have some more drinks. The next morning I asked Salvador, who shared a room with Federico, 'How's it going?' 'It's all patched up now. He tried to make love to me, but he couldn't.'"

"That's one of the things about the Residencia that needs to be discussed and clarified, but it won't happen."

"I don't think any of them were real homosexuals, apart from Federico and Cernuda. But back then, with all of us in the Residencia, there was a certain—maybe—promiscuity that never, ever went beyond kisses or that sort of thing, but none of them was homosexual. Dalí wouldn't have cared, because he was amoral. But no, there was nothing more."

(We talk about Dalí. At heart, Luis's hatred for him stems from the fact that by writing about it in his books, Dalí showed the whole world that Federico was homosexual.)

"Federico was impotent. The only real homosexual in the whole group was Gustavo [Durán]. One day we went off to spend a few days at the Monasterio de Piedra in a Renault I had then. He told me all sorts of things about his sexual life—and with laborers! That hurt me twice over, because I was a big believer in the proletariat. But Federico couldn't do it. He might do effeminate things, cowardly things, stupid little things, feeling you up, but no…."

(Those were different times! There were long kisses, even love affairs, but they were always platonic. Kissing was as far as things went. A lot of them didn't have the money to go whoring or a place to take a girl. They were still masturbating when they were really too old for it.)

"I almost got into a fight with Martín Domínguez—the other strong man in the Residencia—because he insisted that Federico was homosexual. It was on a day he'd gone to the Residencia to eat dinner with d'Ors…"

"What a couple!"

"… and with don Alberto. Federico was dressed to the nines, with his little bow tie. I told him, 'I have to talk to you about something very important.' We went to eat at a joint on the Calle de Alcalá. Now it's very elegant with tablecloths and all, but in those days, it was rough, with bottles of wine lined up all along the tables. We ordered our stew. 'Okay, what's up?' 'Look, Federico, it's really serious.' Anyway, without hinting or beating around the bush, I just asked him all in a rush. He got up, totally offended: 'Our friendship is over for good!' The next day we made up.[122] In my mind, at least back then, he wasn't. Maybe in Argentina. When he got back from Cuba, he seemed less controlled. But he couldn't do it. Dalí told me so. Pepín told me too. Anyway, we need to make it clear, so there's no confusion, that for us a queer was as much a man as any other man, or as much a woman as any other woman. He was queer. What can you do? That's the way he was born."

"Sometimes I think we all have a little of that in us."

"And don't forget that the two best poets of our generation, Federico García Lorca and Luis Cernuda, were homosexuals. I'm not talking about that general tendency in the rich

kids of our generation—the ones who were writers—to exalt masculine friendship until it almost seemed like a homosexual thing. When they were out in the country or at the Bombilla Park, there were lots who'd kiss each other as if they had a different kind of relationship, which they didn't. I don't want to name names, because they'd probably be offended."

"In all this, there's an underpinning of personal protest that you have to keep in mind. In this respect and in other ways too, life in the Residencia de Estudiantes makes me think of life in the Oxford and Cambridge colleges. You say it was misogynous and not queer. I don't have any reason to doubt you, but at least one of our friends left the Residencia because he wasn't convinced that was true. The separation of sexes created a critical situation in our generation. There was a Residencia for young gentlemen and another one for young ladies (it's odd how *señorito* takes on a derogatory meaning [rich and spoiled] and *señorita* doesn't), and then the Atheneum for men and the Lyceum for women."

* * *

"What kind of life did you lead in the six years you spent—I mean the first period, until 1926 [actually 1925]—in Madrid?"

"Well, I became part of the Ultraístas, with the ones who published *Grecia*, *Cervantes*, *Tableros* and *Ultra*. That's how I met Borges, Paszkiewicz—do you remember Paskievich?—Jahl, Huidobro, the Rivas Panedas brothers, Eugenio Montes, Isaac del Vando Villar—the very great, the very important Isaac del Vando Villar—and, of course, Guillermo de Torre and, especially, Ramón [Gómez de la Serna].[123] It was with the Ultraístas that I started to have anarchistic ideas, if we can call them ideas. We decided to raise funds in an effort 'to save the Russian children from starvation.' We had I don't know how many flyers printed up, and we passed them out in cafes and in front of movie theaters, all of us with our collection boxes: Guillermo de Torre, Rivas Panedas, del Vando Villar. We organized a big festival in the Teatro del Centro. Everybody participated: the best known actors and singers who performed at the Teatro Real, along with Xirgu and Borrás and La Argentina.[124] Of course, none of them charged, and we collected quite a lot of money. Fifteen or sixteen stars—the most famous in Madrid at the time—all pitched in. I never did meet Cansinos-Assens, but I did know d'Ors, who always came to our gatherings, there in the Platerías café. Federico always called it the 'Flaterías' for the hot air we generated. Samblancat went once.[125] Our group always met there, close to the door. The café doesn't exist anymore. It used to have two exits: one on the Calle Mayor and the other on the plaza where that old restaurant is: Botín. I started to be an anarchist about then, and I didn't change my mind about those ideas until 1930. It may have been with that group that I met Gil Bel, who was also from Aragón and an anarchist as well. He was a friend of Rafael [Sánchez Ventura]. He edited the CNT newspaper in Madrid. I ran into him again in August of '36, in the second month of the war, and he told me, happy as a clam: 'We're going to found a colony for intellectuals in Torrelodones! It'll be the first one in Europe. There are no bourgeois left. Some have fled, and we don't know where the others are. The thing is: all the big country homes up there are empty.' 'You want to do this fifteen kilometers from the front! Are you crazy?' 'Yes, yes, it'll work.' 'With Franco fifteen kilometers away, forget it!'"

…

"I was playing the rich gentleman back then: I must have bought hundreds of coffees with milk for Humberto [Rivas Panedas] in the cafés around the Puerta del Sol. He never

lost his Catalonian accent. He used to tell me about a poor employee in the postal service who went by there every day at a quarter 'til four; every day that mailman would slip Humberto a copy of his poem for the day, under the table. It drove Humberto crazy. You'd think writing verse was something to be ashamed of, but he read them."

"He was right. It is shameful."

"God knows how many pieces of toast I bought him to go with his coffee. 'I haven't eaten today or yesterday,' he'd tell me, and it was true."

"I saw José [Rivas Panedas] die, a little after I got her here [Mexico]. He was in a clinic for actors. He was very composed, convinced the Republic would win out soon. Not Humberto. Or not so much. I don't think he ever went back to Spain. I'm not sure."

"Humberto was to ultraísmo what Breton was to surrealism. He was much more important than del Vando Villar."

"Guillermo de Torre doesn't say much about him. Maybe he's jealous."

"Maybe. 1921. Araquistáin ran into the 'Dashing Chevalier' on San Jerónimo and gave him a hell of a slap. I don't know how he did it. You know Araquistáin was on the short side and that animal Carretero was almost a giant.[126] The thing is, Araquistáin hit him, and the other, pseudo-offended and very dignified, challenged him to a duel. You'll remember he was known as a great swordsman. Araquistáin, of course, refused. I don't even remember now what it was all about, probably something Carretero wrote in one of his columns. Anyway, the Ultraístas thought the slap was great, and we worked like demons to put together a banquet for Araquistáin at the Hotel Palace. All of Spain went—except for you. As usual with the Ultraístas, the ones who got things moving were Humberto Rivas and del Vando Villar. I don't remember if there were two-hundred or four-hundred guests. Everyone signed the invitation. The only one who didn't was Cajal. I went to talk with Cajal, at the Café del Prado, in front of the Atheneum, where he went every day. I approached with all due respect: 'Don Santiago, I'm Buñuel. I don't know if you remember me. I prepared lots of flies' corneas for you. I worked with Bolívar.' Don Santiago looked at me: 'Buñuel, my friend, I won't sign, because my articles (or my memoires, I don't remember which) are at the *ABC*, and since the Dashing Chevalier is an editor … well, he'd probably put an end to that project.' He didn't sign. That's what I remember."[127]

* * *

I met Chabás at the barracks on the Calle Princesa; we were doing our military service, in the First Cavalry. Chabás with his bass voice, his enormous eyelashes and eyes like María Félix."

"He was handsome." …

"One night we presented a program about guignol at the Residencia. Those things were always full. We took turns talking. Chabás spoke about guignol from the literary point of view. It was fine, but there was no applause. They didn't know who he was. On the other hand, since I was very popular in the Residencia, I had a huge success. They were constantly interrupting me to shout 'Bravo!' Later Mattheu, who performed guignol on the big boulevards—Recoletos and the Castellana—set up his show and presented six or seven little pieces. Federico really liked his version of *Don Cristobita*."[128]

Speaking of good-looking men, we go back to the subject of Gustavo Durán and the effect he had on Federico.

"What a fellow! What sensitivity! And he plays the piano…!" Buñuel imitates Federico's voice and gestures with great flair and humor.

"Gustavo was a strange case. I got him a job at the Museum of Modern Art in New York after the war. He worked under my orders. After a week, he'd taken over. If it hadn't been for McCarthy, he'd have become a U.S. ambassador. He was so brilliant that he'd succeed in whatever he set out to do."

"It's a shame he didn't write his memoires. What a book that would have been!"

"Well, yes, but it's probably better that he didn't."[129]

* * *

"Federico used to ditch us at the Café Castilla, leaving me with the Ultraístas, with Dalí, with the Domínguez sisters. Dalí had gone back to wearing outlandish costumes—he had long side-burns, a long lock of hair over his face and a short, absurd-looking cape—and Sánchez Ventura—worse yet! The Domínguez sisters wore the plainest clothes they could find. They were disciples of Unamuno"—Luis makes a gesture as if he were buttoning up don Miguel's high-collared, Presbyterian vest. "One of them wound up marrying Vicens."

"Who had his own little ways, didn't he? And how about you? How did you dress?"

"I wore normal clothes. Like Federico. He'd ditch us in the filthy cafés where we got together with Garfías, del Vando Villar, Guillermo de Torre. I saw Guillermo not long ago."

"Who's the deafest?"

"Between two deaf men you never know. I haven't been deaf so long as he has, about six years. I suffer from two kinds of deafness: the kind that involves the nerves is the most serious and the most constant; the other goes up and down, depending on the day. The notes of a scale sound the same. I don't know what your voice sounds like. If they play a tango and tell me it's Beethoven, I'm not sure at first. After a while, I realize it's not."

"Did you really like Wagner?"

"Oh, yes. I was one of those enthusiasts who'd go the Teatro Real with a score and follow the music. When operas started coming out on records, I had *Die Meister singer*, *Die Walkure*, *Parsifal*, all in complete sets. Later, at a get-together in Paris with 'Les Six' [the composers] I talked about it with Auric. They all hated Wagner. He couldn't believe what he was hearing me say. He called Poulenc and the others over. 'Come over here! Come over here!' He gathered them around me. 'I'll bet you don't know which musician Buñuel likes? Wagner!' They hated him. Of course, I also liked Debussy. Today I don't like him nearly as much."

"I always thought you put Wagner and the other great Romantic composers in the soundtracks of your films as a comic counterpoint."

"No, no. I like them."

"What instruments do you like?"

"The trompets, the full orchestra, the oboe and, most of all, the French horn."

"How about the violin?"

"I detest the violin, the cello. Casals is a shit. You can write that down. Pablo Casals [the famous cellist] is a shit."

"But didn't you study violin?"

"Yes…. I like the French horns—Wagner's French horns!—the English horn, the oboe."

"But you used to play the violin."

"Yes. But just to be contrary. When my father wanted me to learn the piano—I was eleven—I opted for the violin, because everybody learned to play the piano. My father thought that was fine. 'Besides,' he said, 'you can always take it with you. On the other hand, the piano….' And he was right; I carried it around."

"Even in Paris."

"Not in Paris."

"Yes."

He thinks for a minute.

"You're right! I'd forgotten. It's funny. I had my violin in Paris! But I really liked the piano. I say 'liked,' because now that I'm deaf I can't hear music. In that sense, I've become a surrealist at the end of my life: the surrealists did not like music."

"We've strayed a long way from Federico."

"It's your fault. He left us in the filthy cafés where we got together with the Ultraístas. In those absurd, boring cafés around plaza Atocha. You know what I mean?"

"Of course. One of the characteristics of those days was the boring cafés where we used to meet."

"The surrealists inherited the tendency."

"I know."

"On the other hand, the expressionists, in Germany and in Switzerland, searched out baroque looking places."

"There's no law about those choices."

"Now, Pombo had character."

"At least the character Ramón gave it. Now, the Nacional…."

"What do you mean? That was for elegant people. Federico used to abandon us and go off with the first-class intellectuals. 'Today Salinas'—or Guillén, or whoever it was—'is inviting me to coffee. People with class.' He'd ditch us, and off he'd go. Later on, I too became a friend of those first-class intellectuals…. Ramón had the greatest influence on our generation."

"You're right, in general. He influenced everybody."

"He was phenomenal."

"I didn't go to Pombo more than once or twice, because I didn't like the atmosphere."

"I went every Saturday, starting in 1918, up to '24. I have some photographs somewhere. We used to get together in Gambrinus in the afternoon and in Platerías at night. Eugenio d'Ors used to go there, because they wouldn't let him in the gatherings with Ortega. They didn't take him seriously. Apart from that, his switch from Catalonian to Spanish really bothered them. They saw it as a sort of betrayal. Add to that his plummy manner and his pretensions about triumphing in Paris. He did hook up with us. At Gambrinus, sometimes labor agitators came: Santalaria, who was director of an anarchist newspaper in Sevilla, Samblancat and a few others."

"Samblancat died here in Mexico not too long ago."

"He was an amazing fellow. He knew a lot. He was also a really, really violent man. One time Rafael Sánchez-Ventura and I invited him to eat at the Residencia de Estudiantes. It was around the time—it must have been September—that I failed the entrance exams as an agronomist, around when Américo Castro made me change direction by telling me that in North America they were looking for Spanish teachers.[130] Américo got a kick out of

Samblancat, especially because of the prologue he wrote for a book of lyrical-social-political poetry by a young Catalonian. The phrase I remember went 'Let's put an end to little romantic novels whose only use is give old girls a clitoral erection.'

"In 1923 they gave Ramón Gómez de la Serna a double banquet. One, given by the academics and the tony people, was at L'Hardy and the other, given by the young folks who went to Platerías, at the Oro del Rhin. Ramón went back and forth from one banquet to the other on a motorbike, well, actually, in the sidecar. At that time in Madrid, apart from taxis, you could rent motorcycles. One time in Rosales, I won five-thousand pesetas off him."

"Gambling?"

"Of course. I treated myself and rented a motorcycle for a week. I kept it at the Residencia. I'd go out and get in the sidecar, and we'd head out to a café on Alcalá or to the Hotel Palace to have a vermouth and then head back to the Residencia. Just like a prince! I have photos of both banquets.

[He goes through a long list of names of intellectuals—virtually all men—attending the banquet and ends with Ugarte.]

"Weren't you and Ugarte going to work on a movie about ghosts in Toledo?"

"We went there to drink. All day long. We didn't eat. We'd have a little glass of sherry and some tapas. Later we'd go to the promenade or the boulevard to throw up over the parapet into the river. We went to bed in the small hours. I'd get up at eight as usual and take a walk. I remember very clearly that one day, while I was shaving, Eduardo looked at me out of the corner of his eye, that bug eye of his, and said, 'I hate you.' I believed him. I told him, 'I'll wait for you at twelve in that café on Zocodover.' He came. 'So, you don't hate me anymore?' 'I'm getting over it.'"

"My god! It's not important. I can hardly believe you still remember that kind of thing! Eduardo was probably furious because you'd woken him up so early after going to bed so late. It's strange: you remember everything you see and hear, but not why it happened."

"Maybe so. I don't know. Something like it happened with Morente [the Catholic professor of philosophy]. I used to go to Morente's class … even though what I was studying was literature and history. That year he was explaining Kant. I understood it all perfectly, but afterwards none of it stayed with me. On the other hand, what happens, what I see, I don't forget those things."

"What books had you read before then?"

"The same ones everybody read. All the detective series that were popular at the time: Nat Pinkerton, Sherlock Holmes, Nick Carter, Dick Turpin, and the serial novels: Ponson du Terrail, Raffles, Salgari … but almost nothing by the boring Mr. Verne, well maybe just *The Mysterious Island* and *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea.* Not much. Later, of course, I read everything to do with sex that I could find in my father's library, but there wasn't very much. Before I left for Madrid, I also read Rousseau and Voltaire and Diderot and *Jean Christophe* too. I don't know if it was at the same time, probably in 1918, I read Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in the Sempere editions and, of course, before going to Madrid, The Weekly Novel and The Novela."[131]

"Those were real pocket books."

"Five cents. Later they went up to ten: Felipe Trigo, Manuel Bueno, Diego San José.[132] And later on, when the Universal Collection got under way, the Russians. All of them, but

especially Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Andreyev, Kuprin, Korolenko, Gorky. That made Juan Chabás, who was one of the 'enlightened' people like you, say 'You boys are still in the age of the samovar.' In the meantime, refined people like you two were reading Cocteau, Valéry and Gide. We got there too, soon enough. *La porte étroite* made a big impression on me.[133] Fifteen years later, I realized how bad it was. And Cocteau … there's nothing to say."

"We didn't stop reading the Russians."

"I've tried to reread them lately. I can't exactly say I don't like them anymore, but almost…. Apart from Tolstoy, of course, but now I can't even tolerate Dostoyevsky."

"Even though there are only a few years between them, we could almost say there are two generations: the Sempere Library generation and the Universal Collection generation."

"We read the Russians in the Universal Collection."

"Yes, but we really didn't grow up reading the Sempere writers. Even though I didn't exactly see eye to eye with Ortega, he was the one who decided what we would read. There's no arguing with that."

"I left Madrid in '24 [actually '25], and Ortega didn't influence me at all."

"Of course not. He didn't found the *Revista del Occidente* until 1923."[134]

"I didn't even know who he was." [Buñuel's earlier comments on Ortega at the Residencia contradict this assertion.]

"You took up Benjamin Péret instead. We've changed a lot since then."

"I'm still a virgin when it comes to Proust. I can't bear those terrible square pages without any breaks, black as a spider. Horrible! I never got past the first page of *Within a Budding Grove*. What struck me more than anything was the discovery of Fabre. It must have been in '20 or '21. His work made such an impression on me that I decided to study natural sciences.[135] I did it with Bolívar, but I've already told you all that."

"We're talking about books now."

"Spengler."

"But Spengler…. We're in 1923 at least, if not '24."

"I read his work like a novel, and I didn't get past the first volume."[136]

"We need to talk some more about the Ultraístas."

"The ones who went to the Café Castilla. Emilio Carrere was one of them. We used to tease him. Poor old thing! If you could have seen what his hair was like, how dirty he was and the dandruff, and the lice![137] That went on until we went on the excursion with [the historians] Américo Castro and [Manuel] Gómez Moreno. Américo started saying that in, America, well North America, they needed Spanish teachers. And that it was very easy. So I asked him what you needed to do. 'What are you studying?' 'Natural Sciences.' Because first I planned to be an agronomist and I studied that for a year or two, but then I switched to Natural Sciences, and now Américo was telling me that if I wanted to go to North America (I didn't want to live on the stipend my mother gave me, I wanted to get out of Spain), I could do it by studying Liberal Arts. The next day, I started studying. I switched to universal history, and Ballesteros failed me, but I kept on with history until I graduated. In the meantime, Centeno appeared, and people started talking about the UNESCO of the time [the Society of Intellectual Cooperation of the Society of Nations], and it seemed that Eugenio d'Ors was going as a representative, so I traded Paris for America. D'Ors was a good friend of mine, and I had a lot of respect for him."

"I knew him too."

"Don't tell me! We're talking about 1922, '23, '24, before those famous commentaries, I think they were in '28. The king had been sick, and later he came out on a balcony to greet the multitude. D'Ors wrote, in all seriousness, in the *ABC*, describing the event: 'And then that celestial body made its appearance.' No, no. Before that, we all liked d'Ors. He was, truly, one of the few people that spoke well of art."

"I could never stand him. Maybe because I knew him personally during the time of the 'celestial body,' and in Catalonia, where he really stood out as a traitor. But it's not even that. Apart from *La ben plantada*—even though people say he had considerable talent—his work never interested me.[138] And it's not because I didn't read him. I don't think I've missed any of his books. Friends of mine whom I trusted, people like Canedo, praised his work, but it never convinced me. Everybody, just like you, recognizes his affectation, his propensity for giving himself airs, his pomposity, but, in spite of it all, everybody admires him. And he's one of the few Spaniards, of the very few—if you think about the terrible way the world has just ignored Spain ever since the Protestant victory—who has crossed national frontiers and who is—still!—translated and read in other countries. I must be the one who's gotten it wrong."

"Maybe not. We're talking about two different things. The point is that back then I was determined to leave Spain and get involved in that Intellectual Cooperation business, and once I had my degree in Liberal Arts, it was pretty easy. I'm not sure if it was don Alberto Jiménez—I think it was—who sent me to see don Pablo Azcárate, or if it was Madariaga.[139] He told me that what I needed to do was to go to Paris and study French politics, to learn English and study English politics. I could do it all, he said, reading *Le Temps* and *The Times*. I went and started studying French and English in an academy, but I spent the rest of my time on film."

"I'm guessing that about eighty per cent of what you're telling me is true. It sounds like what you might have told your mother back then. Now may not be quite the time to talk about the rest of it, or about Vicens, or about the other charms that Paris held out for you. Not just for you, of course, but for all of us. It's odd. '24 was the year I went back to Paris for the first time, but what we're talking about is your experience. What were you reading back then?"

"The same stuff you were, the same stuff everybody was: Cendrars, Max Jacob … everybody who was big at the time. Gide…."[140]

"The surrealists?"

"Yes, but not much. Up until '27 I thought they were a bunch of queers."

"When did you read Sade for the first time? You've told me more than once that he was critical in your life. So it turns out that the three men who had the biggest influence on your view of the universe and your relation to it were Federico García Lorca, who showed you the world of the spirit, and—around the same time—Fabre, who showed you about insects, and—in 1929 or '30—Sade, who made you see a world you'd never imagined before."

"And that the majority of people had never imagined before, because it was almost impossible to find a copy of his work."

"And today, even though you find copies, people only see what's now called 'sadism'; that is, they find pornography, when Sade is precisely the opposite of all that."

"Of course. The first atheist, the first great atheist in the world was Sade, apart from Heraclitus and a few of those other Greeks we know almost nothing about. Vaillant-

Couturier told me that Lenin had told him that Sade was the first great materialist in history. From the philosophical and moral point of view there's nobody to compare him to. He made a tremendous impression on me. The first copy of his work that I ever held in my hands belonged to Tual, who lent it to me one night…."

"What order did you read it in?"

"First *Les Cent Vingt journées*, then *Justine*, *Juliette* and *Le Boudoir*."

"And *Le Dialogue entre un prêtre et un moribond*."[141]

"Of course! I don't remember where it comes in. It's wonderful. I don't know if it was Breton or Aragon who made Noailles buy a copy of *Les Cent Vingt Journées*, which you could buy in Berlin for forty-thousand francs. It was the 1905 edition that was printed in only ten copies. And it was Proust's copy. You just couldn't find Sade's books back then. It was so hard to find them that—imagine!—I'll tell you a story about that. The day that Crevel committed suicide Dalí found him—because Dalí was the first one who got there—I don't know if it was at the beginning or the end—and then later on Breton and Noailles and I. They talked to Tota Cuevas de Vera, who was his lover (well, you know that Crevel was homosexual, but since being homosexual was so unacceptable, he made a desperate effort to overcome the condition, and Tota did everything possible, and impossible, to help him, and she was his lover). Anyway, Tota came in from London, on a private plane, and the minute she came into the room, she realized that the four volumes of *Justine* were missing. Who took them? I don't know. Nobody ever found out. Noailles already had them. Breton…. I don't think so, because he had lent them to me. I don't know, and it doesn't matter. Whoever did it did the right thing, because René's books ended up with his family, who were all pathetic churchgoers, with his sister, with I don't know who."[142]

* * *

"Two different women dispute the honor of having taught you to dance the tango."

"They're both wrong. I went to an academy in Paris, in 1925."

"The same as I did, that same year, in Barcelona. In a dirty apartment on the Calle de los Escuderos on a third floor."

"There were a man and a woman who taught it—and we were off!" He hums *La Comparsita*.

* * *

[In the following section I have interpolated additional material from the transcript of FMA, Cinta 24, 6–14, which at some points provides more detail than the interview in the 1985 book; however, there are cuts in the tape, which must have been supplemented by notes from Aub. I have relied on both sources. The interview ends when Buñuel dives into the swimming pool.]

"You hadn't planned to make another film [after various jobs and projects fell through in the U.S.]?"

"I'd thought about making my kind of film, but I didn't have a clear idea. I've never thought anything like: 'I have a passionate desire to make my kind of film.' No. It was a confused feeling, a vague notion. I knew—but in a confused, almost distant way—I could do something in film, but I didn't know how or when. In fact, at that point I was done with that sort of thing, but I had planned to keep on working in cinema. They gave me a contract

in Hollywood to go to France, but I went to Mexico instead, because the business with Denise Tual didn't work out.[143] I kept working in film out of inertia. 'What work do you do?' I couldn't say: 'I'm a shoemaker or a musician.' So I would said, 'I'm a filmmaker.' 'Oh, that's great.'

"I had met Dancigers years ago in Paris. 'Stay here In Mexico,' he told me, 'we'll make a movie together. I have two good singers: Negrete and Libertad Lamarque.'[144] 'Great. What'll we do?' There was a novel I thought would work, not what turned out to be 'Tampico' ['En el viejo Tampico' was the first title of *Gran Casino*]. It was by a Frenchman, Michel Veber, the son of the novelist. The son had worked in film, and he'd even worked with Max Ophüls on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He'd written the screenplay for Ophüls [see 269*n*102]. Anyway, he had a novel about gold miners, and I talked to Magdaleno about making it Mexican, with a Mexican dialogue and all that.[145] I made the movie, well, really because we needed to eat, to stay in Mexico and to eat, but also because I hadn't made a film since 1932 [actually 1933]. This was in '45. I was happy to do it, to practice the technical side of things. I was going back to my profession, no? I made the movie. Afterward, they punished me for three years. I say 'punished,' because nobody wanted anything from me, nobody wanted to give me a film.[146] Then I made *El gran calavera* [*The Great Madcap*]. It was a huge box-office success, and it set me up for *Los olvidados*, that was the first time that…."

"Making *Los olvidados* was a way to be yourself again."

"Exactly. *Los olvidados* was a return to the self. We were having a very hard time. Especially Larrea. I still had a little money left from *La gran calavera*. We had a lot of fun. More than he admits. He was up for anything, as long as it made him some money, and one of our ideas turned out to be *Los olvidados*. We got the idea of making a melodrama—the cheapest kind of melodrama—about a newsboy: 'A Little Orphan at Your Service, Boss.' We had a great time adding scenes, each one worse than the last, lots of it plagiarized, taking stuff from here and there, like a Peter Lorre movie. I told Dancigers the story, and he didn't like it at all. He said to do whatever I wanted, but to make it worthwhile. Then he said he had a Spaniard who could work with me, a young actor. It was Alcoriza. He introduced us, and I got down to work. Around the same time, Larrea and I read in the news—there were a lot of incidents like it—that they'd found the body of an eleven year old boy who'd been tossed onto a garbage dump. 'So, this could be a starting point.'

"We worked for a couple of days—remember?—with you and with Alcoriza, and they paid you both, but you didn't come out in the credits because of problems with the union. Alcoriza didn't want to be in the credits, and you refused as well. But what we talked about gave me the idea of showing a broken-down, old Spanish aristocrat, walking along Avenida Madero, and a rascal, a kid. The only part that stayed in the film was the image of a beggar who finds the photograph of a *conquistador* in the garbage. He looks at it without a word and then throws it away. We didn't need to make any other commentary. Then I started going to the children's court, to the women's prison that María Luisa Ricaud directed, and she let me see the reports from the—what are they called?—social workers. I went to clinics for the retarded, I saw lots of files on beggars and so on."

"It sounds like Galdós, like you're repeating the prologue of *Misericordia*."[147]

"That's the only influence I recognize. Galdós. I mean in general."

"There are all those dreams in Galdós. I've thought more than once that it would be a good subject for a thesis."

"There's no doubt about that."

We turn to our drinks, Buñuel to his vermouth, me to my whiskey.

"I went by myself more than forty times to consult reports and to look for exterior locations for the shanty towns. About twenty times more with Fitzgerald, the set designer, and three or four times with Alcoriza. When I went by myself, I used a little disguise. I didn't want [any trouble]."

"Ha! I can just picture it!"

"I'd put on some overalls and a straw hat, and I'd go to the slums to see what was up, to take a little walk. I'd go to the shantytown. I was fascinated by all of that. It was upsetting."

"We premiered the film at the Cine México, in November of 1950, I believe. The first day, we invited about fifty people, all friends. As they were leaving, everybody was very polite: 'Well done, Buñuel, very well done.' No hint of enthusiasm, everybody looking down in the mouth. Then Bertha Gamboa, León Felipe's wife, showed up. She was a Mexican, with long, filed fingernails, and she just turned into a fury, a harpy. She wanted to scratch my eyes out. I was afraid of her, but I couldn't back down. She was screaming at me and waving those fingernails in my face: 'You miserable swine! You shit! You pig! Those kids aren't Mexican! I'm going to tell them to deport you! You scoundrel!' She was beside herself. And Ruth Rivera, Diego Rivera's daughter, standing there beside her, like a statue. Siquieros, on my right, had just congratulated me with real enthusiasm; he said, 'Don't pay them any mind. It's just woman stuff!' And to think that Bertha used to come for lunch at my house, with León of course, not just once, but six, ten, fifteen times. In short, this was on a Thursday, as I remember, and by the next Tuesday, the run was over.[148]

"After that it went to Cannes, they gave it a prize and then, thanks to Ragasol, they put it on again, this time at the Cine Prado, where it played seven or eight weeks.[149] That's when the protests started coming in from the League of Mexican Schoolteachers, or something like that, and from I don't remember which other groups. Wholesale insults. But its success in Europe shut everyone up."

"This return to yourself with *Los olvidados*, did it happen more or less by chance or because you started looking for it as soon as you got to Mexico?"

"No, no. I wasn't looking for anything. It didn't seem possible. I didn't believe I'd ever make personal films again. I thought all that was over. Because my films had been very, very personal; I had been the producer and everything."

"So, after *Los olvidados*, going back to commercial films must have been even more painful than making them for the first time."

"No."

"You didn't care?"

"Of course I cared, but I had a wife and two kids. I had to make a living, no? So, after *Los olvidados*, which was a huge disaster in Mexico before it won at Cannes, they offered me … what's it called? … *Susana* [*Susana*]? No."

"Yes, it was *Susana*."

"No, I don't think so. Is *Susana* really the first one I made after *Los olvidados*? I didn't like it much. I did what I could with it, but I messed up the ending. People thought I meant them to take the ending seriously. The film might have had something. Some people say it does have something. There are people who like it a lot. I tried to make sure that every

film I shot had an escape valve, that there'd always be a little gap where I could do what I wanted, but circumstances just didn't allow for that, at least up until *Ensayo de un crimen* [*The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz*] in 1955. I didn't want to make *Robinson Crusoe* either. They approached me about it, some Americans who had come here. Well, Dancigers put it to me. I would never have come up with the idea of making *Robinson*, but once I had it in my hands, I tried to do something with it. I could relate to it. I felt something of myself in the film. The quality was better, and the material was better than in *Gran Casino*, but I wouldn't have chosen it. I wouldn't have made *Ensayo de un crimen* either. I did it, because I had to film something."

"And yet it was a big success."

"Which one?"

"*Ensayo.*"

"Yes, but not here in Mexico. I think it was on three weeks—no, four—in a theater in…. I don't remember what it's called. I wasn't here. I was in Paris when they showed it."

"At the Palacio Chino."

"It's been much more popular abroad than in Mexico. I'm not that taken with it, except for a few points."

"Who produced it?"

"La Alianza Cinematográfica [the Film Alliance] Patiño was the producer. A good person, easy to work with. He didn't even read the screen adaptation. He didn't get in the way: 'Do whatever you want to.'"

"As far as I can see, your producers usually don't read your adaptations. It's because…."

"That's not so. They read them a lot, a lot. The thing is: I can do what I want to now, before I couldn't. Now if we don't agree, we just part ways. If the one who's paying doesn't like what he sees, he has the right to turn it down, but he doesn't have the right to change scenes so that they fit in with conventional morality or with popular taste or to make them more commercial. Nowadays, that kind of change is totally forbidden if you're working with me."

"So you're totally responsible for your last films."

"Yes."

"At least up to the point where you feel responsible for the producer's capital."

"Right. In my last films, with Alatriste, it's been perfect.[150] If there's anything wrong with them, it's because I couldn't do any better. I had the freedom to go even farther, to do anything I wanted to, but I limited myself, I censured myself. The three I made with Alatriste, the first three I made in France,[151] and then the last one, *La Voie Lactée* [*The Milky Way*] and *Belle de Jour* too. I've had complete freedom with all of them; the producers didn't meddle—just the opposite, they pushed me to go even farther. With *Nazarín*, I was more or less free, because Barbachano is a fierce censor.[152] He cut a scene that was very important to me, a scene with some Indians. He just refused to do it. In the nicest way, he tells me: 'I'm not going to do it. Can you imagine the scandal it would cause here in Mexico! That scene with the little Indians would make everybody furious.'"

"Okay, why don't you tell me the story about the Hakim brothers [the producers] with *Belle de Jour*, about the two little scenes that the Hakims basically arranged to be censored."

"I take back what I've said. I don't want to talk about *Belle de Jour*, because I don't know. I suspect *Belle de Jour* was totally censored in the first version. Yes, that's the way it was. It was turned down for the Cannes festival, and that was unanimous. And when the

first editing was finished, the Hakims showed it to—I think—the director of the Colisée, a theater in Paris on the Champs Elysées. It's a trust that has several cinemas; they say it's Catholic, that the administrators are Catholic. Anyway, the Hakim brothers told me that the director of the Colisée told them: 'We'd love to show the movie, but there's a religious scene in it that our bosses aren't going to like. It's the one that takes place in the castle, the necrophilia scene.' I had interpolated, but pretty discreetly, a requiem mass with the duke as an assistant, just the priest and him. Nobody else was involved. There was a casket with no cadaver and no prostitute. Later, when he put her in the coffin, you saw Grünewald's Christ crucified, just at the edge of the image, and it showed the painting for half a minute, the face, the hooks, the hands, the feet, the toenails, right? It's horrible; that Christ makes a real impression. Well, that image was cut too. So, all the religious elements that were meant to introduce the erotic scene were cut out. Eroticism without Christianity is a kind of half-baked eroticism, because there's no sense of sin. Agnostic eroticism is fresh and natural, but eroticism mixed with Christianity creates a sense of sin. It's the conflict that does it. That's why I think the scene was ruined. It was 'a little coincidence' that the censors happened to agree with the taste of the director of the Colisée as that was communicated by the Hakims. That's all I can tell you. I don't know who cut the scene."

"So, as you see it, there's no eroticism in India?"

"Of course, there is. There's eroticism as in Eros, but…."

"But not as a conflict."

"Not like Christianity or Judaism…. Christianity, really. I don't think the sense of sin is so strongly developed or so compelling in any other religion as it is in Christianity."

"Do you think the sexual act is diabolical?"

"I'm not saying another word." He laughs. "We've talked a lot today. Let's have a swim."

"Fine, let's have a swim, but in your films, the religious element…."

"I've been putting more and more religious elements in my films. It's a bit of an obsession. Have you ever seen politics in my films? Never. There's nothing political in them."

"No, what's important for you is that the sexual act is basically diabolical…."

"I have no idea what the sexual act is, sir." And he dives into the pool.

* * *

"Your mother was extremely religious."

"She was. My mother knew all of the clichés about things divine. She had her prayer book memorized."

"How old were you when she started telling you about those divine things?"

"Starting when I was little. A prayer before bedtime, you know what it's like, when I was six or seven. The pictures of the Guardian Angel."

"And telling your beads."

"Right. When my father went back to Cuba to liquidate his business there, we prayed the rosary every night. It's what people did in Spanish families. The father's on a trip! For my mother, my father's trip to Cuba was like the astronauts' trips now, or worse. And he was gone for a month or two. Round-trip, so almost a month at sea, plus the month he spent in Havana. Two months, with us praying the rosary every night, with the servants and all the children gathered together and…."

"That was in 1912, wasn't it?"

"1912, yes. I sneaked away lots of nights. I'd get bored even though I was a real believer. My mother just repeated all of the clichés of the Church, of the priests, of the prayer books, but she was one of those obsessives who talk about religion all the time. In that sense, she was normal, very normal. Although, of course, when the time came, we had to fulfill all of our religious obligations. She was strict about that."

"How about the religious schools?"

"First I went to a school run by the Marianists. I was there for a whole year. I think Mantecón was there too. No. He was much younger than I. Anyway, when I was eight I went to the Jesuits, and I was in a Jesuit school until I was fourteen, fourteen or fifteen. I studied for my secondary school degree, during my fifth and sixth year, in a public school, and I graduated when I was seventeen. So, I probably left the Jesuits in 1915."

"So your masturbation is perfectly Jesuitical."

"I don't know what masturbation is, sir. I don't know anything about it."

* * *

"Open spaces scare me. I don't know what to do with them. I always find a way to shut in my characters."

"With the sets full of furniture, everything very full, very heavy, very decorated, like the rooms you grew up in at the beginning of the century."

"Maybe so."

"Spanish literature is also a literature of shut-ins, a convent sort of literature. Even the picaresque novel is a series of different forms of captivity. There are virtually no Spanish landscape painters, only the ones at the end of the nineteenth century, who lead to the Generation of '98, who, in turn discover the Spanish landscape in a way that makes you flee from it all over again.[153] That's why there are no real Spanish Romantics

"That's why the 'Americanists' [with their exaltation of the landscapes of the New World] occupy so little space in the history of Spanish literature."

"And you're hardly 'American' at all."

* * *

"Maurice Bessy tells this story in his book. You don't have it? I'll give it to you next time you come by the house. It must have happened in '54 or so, when I was on the jury. It's great to be on the jury at the Cannes festival, because you can always do something. That year they presented a North American film by [Fred] Zinnemann. It was the first one that was presented as out of the running. Even though I was on the jury, I spoke very badly about the film to some journalists the next day. That's something you shouldn't do. The members of the jury are not supposed to make comments. And the president of the jury was Cocteau. Kyrou and Benayoun were both on the jury, and since they were surrealists, of course they hated Cocteau with a passion.[154] It was all very funny. Now I remember: Zinnemann's film was *From Here to Eternity.* Poor Zinnemann, he was half crazy, terrified by McCarthyism, so he made a movie that was shamelessly imperialistic and anti-communistic. The first important film he directed had been based on Anna Seghers' novel *The Seventh Cross*—do you remember it?—with Spencer Tracy. He must have been scared to death. Because I said *From Here to Eternity* was revolting, the American newspapers started to call me a communist. What can you do?

"I'm talking about all of this because of Cocteau, but it doesn't really have anything to do with him. One day, at a meeting of the jury, he said, 'Monsieur Buñuel, I'd like to talk to you.' 'Of course, when would you like to do it?' 'What do you think about five o'clock at the Carlton bar?' 'Fine, nobody will be there at that hour. There'll be a few people upstairs, but not many, because they'll either be watching the afternoon projection or getting ready for the evening projection.' 'Agreed.' At five on the dot, because I'm very punctual, I sit down at the bar of the Carlton, and I start waiting. Nobody was there. After a while, a couple came in. They sat down; after a while, they left. Another couple came and went. Cocteau didn't show up. At six-thirty, I got up and left. The next day, when we saw each other: 'What happened?' 'That's what I want to know. I was there from five o'clock until six-thirty, and nobody came.' Maurice Bessy tells the story in his book about magic acts and supernatural events.[155] Apparently, both of us were there, and we didn't see each other."

"He probably said the Majestic, and you heard him wrong."

"No. I still was only half deaf."

"But you were already half deaf."

"You always come up with rational explanations. Maybe you're right, and you can write a paper for a conference of otorhinolaryngologists on 'How the Ear of a Half-Deaf Person Can Transform Majestic into Carlton.'"

"Roblès says that by that time [1955–56] you had your choice of the most famous actors from all over the world for your films."[156]

"No, Emmanuel Roblès has gotten things mixed up, or maybe he just didn't know. But Ténoudji, who's considered a stingy producer, asked me, 'Who do you want for the role?' I answered, as a joke, 'Greta Garbo.' Without even a moment's hesitation, he rang his secretary and asked her to place a call to Hollywood so he could talk to Greta Garbo. I had to stop him: 'No, no, if we're talking seriously, the one I really want is Gina Lollabrigida.' And that very night Jaeger and I went to Rome, but she was moving into a new place, and she wouldn't even see us. So then I thought about Lucia Bosè, who had just married Luis Miguel.[157]

"Things worked out just as Roblès says, but almost every night Luis Miguel phoned me at the Hotel Boulevard Raspail to find out who was going to be the leading man. Finally, I could tell him, 'It's Georges Marchal.' Then he started asking me what kind of person Marchal was, what sort of things he did, etc. etc. I told him that Marchal was a serious person, that he was married, that he lived in a castle. All that was fine. First we were planning to film in Sardinia. I spent two weeks there, looking for exteriors, starting with Cagliari, and so on, but then we realized that there was no point in filming in another country if we could shoot the picture in Corsica, which is French. And that's where we did it. Luis Miguel came a couple of times to see Lucia. He was jealous, horribly jealous, and he had an odd sense of humor. Imagine, one day he went to eat lunch at Ténoudji's house—you've been there—there behind the Estrella. The only ones for lunch were Lucia, Luis Miguel and Monsieur Bondass, a ruined French producer that Ténoudji used as a second-in-command, a great guy.

"The jokes they told—if you're not in on the secret, they aren't funny. Luis Miguel started telling them, very seriously, that every two months, I'd shut myself up in a mad house for a couple of weeks, because I was afraid I'd do something totally crazy. The next day, Bondass told me about it, and then I told Ténoudji: 'That's not funny. He's just doing

it to take revenge. This is the truth, but very few people know it: two years ago in Córdoba a bull gored Luis Miguel and messed up both his balls. So, he does these things … out of revenge.'"

* * *

Around 1954 Luis, Juan Luis and Jeanne, along with the Mexican ambassador Álvarez Acosta are on their way back from France. They have a stop-over in New York. Luis is the last one off. He's in high spirits. The group goes into the airport café. "Mister Buñuel." They take him to a room, where they shut him in. Later on a uniformed policeman stations himself in front of the door. "Mister Gustavo Durán?" "No. Mister Buñuel Portolés." "Oh, yes, excuse me." "What's going on?" "I don't know. They told me to stay with you here." "But … will they let me go on to Mexico?" "I don't know." Twenty minutes later a boss and a stewardess appear. They take him to the plane, and there—with all the other passengers already settled in—they return his passport.

"When I got back, I went to see Bonté and Gustavo.[158] 'Yes, I did it. I denounced you. You can't imagine. Hours and hours with the CIA on top of me. Six months. I told them everything they wanted to hear.' That's what Gustavo was like. He gave himself over entirely to the causes he served. A little bit of the fault is mine. In '34, in Madrid, when I was working at Warner's, I had twenty-one films to be dubbed. I went to the labs where Gustavo was working, the best labs, of course. We came to an agreement right away. 'I want Mister Durán to dub the films.' 'That's impossible; he's a communist.' 'Look. I don't care, and neither does Warner's. We want somebody who'll do a good job, and if Mister Durán can't do it, I'll take them somewhere else.' He dubbed them. Later on, in New York, I hired him at the Museum of Modern Art, and he almost took my job. Everybody loved him. I've never seen anybody who was more likable. By that time, he was no longer the playboy of Paris, the person involved in all the gossip about Néstor de la Torre,[159] the adorable, angelic, blonde seventeen year old he'd been in his earlier days (later on, incidentally, he dropped about five of those years). If McCarthy hadn't denounced him, he would have lived to be the U.S. ambassador in Paris or in London. He was an advisor to Murphy and to Eisenhower, when Eisenhower was president."[160]

"And do you think he was with the police earlier? I don't mean in our war, but later on, in Cuba."

"Absolutely. He knew everybody. When different Spaniards wanted to go to the U.S., he'd tell them: 'You can go, but not you, because you were in the Tenth Brigade,' and so on and so on."

"A real son of a bitch."

"No. He was doing his job."

Jeanne intervenes: "Luis is like that. If somebody was once a friend of his, he'll forgive him anything. It's clear: Dalí and Gustavo are his best friends."

"It's true. I called Dalí once in New York to punch him in the nose, and we wound up drinking champagne together. But, going back to Gustavo, he owes a lot to Bonté, who's from one of those great North American families."

They're going to bury him in Cyprus, and the peasants, who are grateful for his work, are going to build a monument in his honor. It's odd. He's part of that big group of Spaniards who gave their lives to the U.N.

* * *

"In *Él*, I cut the sonata—I think it was Schubert's—that's being played on the piano while Arturo de Córdova gazes at his sweetheart, so besotted that it's ridiculous. That's why I interposed a different scene. You hear the sound of breaking china. Arturo de Córdova goes to a door, opens it and sees the servant, who has just dropped some plates—for no reason at all, just because."

"The real reason is precisely to interrupt the sonata and the disgustingly sweet scene."

"When Dancigers saw the cut, he told Savage [Carlos Savage, the editor], 'Get rid of that.' I had to threaten to take off and leave him in the lurch, because I was determined that romantic scene wouldn't be shown in one piece. On the other hand, there was just no way to introduce the orchestra in that scene in *Los olvidados.* Do you remember?"

"Of course, the Symphony Orchestra of Mexico set up in a half-constructed building in the middle of the scene when the boys attack the blind man. You know, sometimes I think that kind of disagreement works out. If they had let you use the orchestra—which wouldn't have been all that good—you might not have come up with the idea of the rooster."

"Maybe. Dancigers fell on his knees before me. 'What will Menasce say?'"—Jaime Menasce was the money man—"And of course, from the producer's point of view, he was right."

* * *

"When de Sica was in Mexico—he had come with the idea of making a film of *The Children of Sánchez* by Lewis—he saw *Viridiana*; well, I showed it to him. He was horrified. De Sica! A neorealist!"[161]

"We all know that in your eyes neorealism makes for the worst kind of film."

"I've said it, and I've shown it many times. Anyway, he was stunned. He asked me: 'But, Buñuel, what has society done to you? Has it treated you so badly? Have you suffered so much? It's awful!' Of course, I told him, No, I hadn't suffered personally; that was just the way I saw the film, that's what it was for. He hung back, with Jeanne, and asked her, in a low voice: 'Does your husband beat you?'"

We wound up talking about *Subida al cielo*.

"When Manolito was trying to talk me into making the film, which would be based on a true story, a trip somebody—I don't remember who—took on a second-class bus, from Acapulco to Aihuatanejo, I told him that it would cost him thirty thousand pesos all in, for the screen adaptation and the direction. Up until that point, I had charged twenty-five thousand, but what films! Nobody remembers them now: *Una mujer sin amor* [*A Woman without Love*], *La hija del engaño* [*Daughter of Deceit*], *Susana.* Even for *Los olvidados* I only charged twenty-five thousand. Manolito was incredible!"[162]

"And María Luisa?"

"Don't talk to me about her. The first time we went to have supper at their house, she opened the door and said: 'Are you Buñuel?' 'Yes.' She shouted: 'Manolo! He's not as ugly as you told me!' Then she greeted Jeanne; she lifted her arm, sniffed her underarm and told her: 'It's nice. It smells clean, not like Manolo's balls.' Later on, on the set, when they got there late, Manolo apologized for her, saying she had a headache, with her yelling, 'What headache?! It's menstruation, that's what it is!' And Manolo, so in love with that nut, because she was crazy. Manolito…. Manolito driving with his left arm out, over the roof

of the car, driving with one hand and turning around to tell me with that accent I'll never forget: 'Who would have imagined it, Luis. The things that happen in this life! Who'd ever have guessed I'd become a producer, eh? What do you think? A producer of films!' And he said it with that childish sense of satisfaction that he never lost. And he died, so absurdly, on a straight stretch of road, totally straight, just before Burgos. They'd left San Sebastián late, around eleven I think. They must have had a good bit to drink. They'd gone to the film festival. And he died with his arm bent over the roof of the car. It turned over six or seven times. They say he wanted to confess, because he was Catholic."

"Poor Manolo, dying like that."

"They didn't allow his body to enter Madrid. He's buried in a cemetery in the outskirts. I don't remember which one. Paloma goes, when she's in Madrid. And the same thing is going to happen to all of us, to me and you. That's why I don't want to direct another film in Europe. I'm fine here. I have everything I need. The bottles I need. And if I want to make another film, then I'll do it here, with money from France or Italy or wherever. But going to Europe to film…. One day I'll get a pain here"—he points to the nape of his neck—"and then what?"

* * *

"I never joined the [Communist] Party. The letter is authentic, I know, because it's my handwriting.[163] It must have been given to Unik. When I found out that the Party had summoned them, I went along. I loved Unik and Sadoul even more! Sadoul loved me more than anybody, and I loved him, but he never understood my films. When he saw *Los olvidados,* he sent a pneumatic letter asking me to meet him at a bar on the Champs Elysées. He was terrified, crying. 'How could you have done this?' 'Done what?' 'Shown a cop protecting a little boy! And those speeches.' 'Listen! I had to make some concessions to the Mexican government, but that wasn't one of them. If a mugger attacks you, if he's about to stick a knife in your belly, and suddenly a cop shows up and hits him on the head, that's a good thing, because you're glad you're not dealing with a hole in your belly, it doesn't mean you're defending capitalism.' But he wasn't convinced.

"He didn't like it, and neither did the rest of them. They were all recalcitrant. Up until the moment when [the Russian director] Pudovkin published an article in Moscow—I think it came out in *Pravda*—talking about the tenderness of *Los olvidados* and just going into raptures over the film. Then they all changed their minds, even Aragon, who had had reservations about it, and from that point on *Los olvidados* was recognized as one of my greatest films. Sadoul never understood a thing, but he loved me, and I loved him."

The talk turns to Alcoriza, who's getting attention because of an interview that came out today in *Excelsior.*

"I saw him last night," says Aub. "I'll call him tomorrow. He's busy."

"Why do you want to talk to him? He's not going to tell you any more about me than he says in the article."

"I could talk to his wife, too; she's very bright."

"Yes, but Raquel [Janet's stage name] adores him. In her eyes, everything he does is well done. If you publish an article tomorrow saying he's brilliant, she'll love you for it. Anyhow, he was nothing but a Spanish actor. She's the one who introduced him to the world of books. She made him read, or at least she told him about, works she'd written or read. Later on I left a mark on him culturally and politically, but not cinematically."

"Nobody can do that, except in a superficial way. Otherwise, there'd be thousands of Cervantes, hundreds of Buñuels."

"He's a great guy and a tremendous fan of mine, but I don't think he'll tell you anything interesting."

* * *

"How can you say your characters are good?"

"Nazarín is good; he's very good."

"In Galdós he is, but in your version he causes nothing but trouble."

"You're right. That's the way I am."

"So?"

"It doesn't matter. As I see it, Nazarín is a model priest. The problem is the Catholic religion. He's not to blame."

"I'm not saying he's guilty, and I don't think that a person who's born with a limp or born 'bad' is guilty either. But in your film, Nazarín is, well, you don't want to call him 'bad,' but you have to admit he's not exactly good."

"That's your opinion. I respect it, but you're wrong."

"The idea that he cries at the end because he's lost his faith, because he believes in man, is Octavio Paz's invention."

"That's not a problem. He cries, because for the first time he begins to doubt, to doubt his faith. He first turns down the old woman's charity; then he accepts her gift. He's not sure about anything anymore."

"These days, the same thing could happen to a peasant as to a priest. He hasn't lost his faith, but he starts to doubt. It's the big problem of our time. Nazarín could also be a modern-day communist. That explains the universal relevance—in 1960—of your film. That's why, for example, Sadoul didn't like it the first time he saw it and also why, at the same time, Octavio Paz liked it so much. It's the cinematic expression of the confusion of the present day. I watched *Nazarín* again last night, and I'm changing my opinion."

"That's good. Doubt and insecurity are good things."

"That line when Nazarín tells the old woman, 'God bless you'—the last line in *Nazarín*—it makes me wonder."

"There's nothing unusual about it. That's what we say in Spain."

"And in Mexico, where the film takes place although that's something you keep forgetting. The thing is: even though those are the last words spoken in the film and even though the main character says them, that's not what *Nazarín* is about."

"What is it about, then?"

"Look: I perform acts of evil, and you perform acts of kindness, but—in the end—what does it matter? You're on the good side, and I'm on the bad side. Neither of us makes a difference."[164]

"You're right."

"He's a good man whose actions have bad effects again and again. That scene with the laborers…."

"Yes, and with the corpse, because there's only one corpse. That's my idea; it doesn't come from Galdós!"

And love! Those love scenes between the dwarf Ujo and the prostitute Andara are the

sweetest ones in all Buñuel. He has never done anything else so tender as that, not in dialogues or in images. Love in Luis Buñuel—and this is true of all mannerist art—is only something that happens between opposites, and here I'm not talking about the relationship between the old man and the young girl, which recurs so often in his work, or between rich and poor, or between the thug and the dove. I'm talking about the hunchback and the whore, a love only thwarted by the dwarf's physical inability to follow the line of prisoners. The monstrous touches us with an almost evangelical tenderness that Buñuel almost never surpasses. The sight of Ujo left behind alone in the dust is even more heart-wrenching that Chaplin, who is so often abandoned in his films. And here, miraculously, the union of opposites, of what can't be reconciled, is neither repugnant nor perverse. Buñuel achieves right there, what André Breton called for: the union of life and death, of the real and the imaginary, of the high and the low—in every sense of the two words. The contradiction disappears for a moment in, and because of, their love.

* * *

"So you were never an impresario?"

"Oh, yes, I was, back in the sixties. With a bunch of refugees, I put on *Don Juan de Tenorio* at the Teatro Fábregas in Mexico. It was fantastic. I didn't want it to go on longer than three days. I played the role of don Diego. For three nights, the theater was packed for every performance. They didn't want to stop. At the end, we had seven performances and made a thousand pesos each: Alcoriza, Bravo, Fontanals, who did the sets, and a few others. I love the *Tenorio.* It's brilliant, a masterpiece."[165]

"Last night I saw *Locura de amor* with Guilmáin."

"Guilmáin is a very good actress, but how can you compare possibly compare *Locura de amor* with Don *Juan Tenorio!* The *Tenorio* is one of the high points of theater. That's why people go to see it year after year."

"*L'amour fou*."

Buñuel's weakness for Zorrilla's *Don Juan Tenorio* is well known and has lasted all his life, from the time he played don Juan at the Residencia under Américo Castro's direction, up through the time in the sixties when he played don Juan's father don Diego in the Teatro Fábregas in Mexico … and also directed the work.

"We made forty thousand pesos, and we spent it all on a party. You can imagine the party for yourself. As to the performance, I was already deaf and out of it. Alcoriza had to nudge me so I'd remember when it was my turn to speak."

* * *

"I'd like to make a movie about cholera."

"You already have."

"Well, just a sequence in *Nazarín.*"

"Yes, with one of the most extraordinary images I can remember from any of your films, the one of the little girl, walking down a street in the village, dragging a sheet."

"The thing about cholera…. I've read a lot of novels where it comes in, including one by Thomas Mann. I'd have the epidemic break out so that no one can leave home."

"*El ángel exterminador.* Remember that you put up a flag in it, warning people to stay away from the house, because they believe there's an epidemic inside."

"You're right. I'd forgotten. That came from one of my childhood memories, when there was cholera in Spain in 1911. In Saragossa, we called it 'the cholera from Vendrell [Catalonia].' My father rented an apartment in Vitoria, because people said that 'cholera never touched Vitoria.' In the end, we didn't go. People got over their fear, and we stayed in Saragossa, but I've never forgotten that idea of cholera. It's a calamity, a scourge."

"Sent by God."

* * *

"Who have you most enjoyed working with?"

"I've been happy with everybody, but especially with Alatriste. If you talk to him, you'll see. He thinks the world of me. According to him, they should knock down all the statues of famous people and just put mine up. He's an interesting guy. He's done really amazing things. Sometimes he'll remember what he's supposed to do and sometimes just forget it; it's all the same to him. One of the first times we were doing something together, he said, 'They can say whatever they like about me, that I'm not serious, that I'm shameless, that I'm a thief, but what they can never say about me is that I'm a bad salesman.' And he's right. He's done things with *Simón del desierto* that have just seemed inconceivable. He's kept it under wraps, and now some Englishmen have suddenly appeared and said that they've heard about the film and they want to buy it. It's only fifty-four minutes long. You've seen it. It's not an easy film."

"What are they going to put it on with?"

"I have no idea. I don't care whether it's a documentary about Tanganyika or a common melodrama. The thing is: they offered him ten thousand dollars in cash and forty per cent of the profits. It's a decent offer. He answered: 'I have received your kind offer. I am very sorry that I cannot offer you anything but a party if you should come to Mexico, but I promise you that it will cost at least ten thousand dollars.' It's a total lie, but that's the way he is: a good salesman. But now they're selling it all over—five years after I made it—and selling it at a very good price. One minute he has money; the next, he doesn't have a cent. You were asking me what other film they'd show it with. *Simón* is five reels long. Alatriste ran into Orson Welles in Madrid; he asked Welles if he'd be interested in making a film for him, anything he wanted, with the idea of rounding out the program. Orson said yes, he'd like to shoot *Don Quixote*. Alatriste turned him down, of course."

"*Don Quixote* in five reels…."

"Since Alatriste didn't have a copy of *Simón* in Madrid, he said, 'I'll show it to you tomorrow in Rome.' 'Fine.' They went. Orson saw the film and liked it a lot. On the flight back, they reached an agreement. 'Delighted.' 'Do whatever you like.' 'Great.' 'When it's ready, send me a telegram.' 'And you'll send me twenty thousand dollars and then, during the shoot, one hundred and eighty.' Soon after, Orson Welles sends him the telegram. And that's it. End of story. Imagine. A little while ago, in Madrid, Alatriste runs into Berlanga and a young kid, a screenwriter, and they agree to make a film. They're both good. They agree on a price, four million pesetas for Berlanga and one million for the screenwriter. And they agree that Alatriste will give an advance of six hundred thousand pesetas to one and a hundred thousand to the other. 'Oh no! I don't have my checkbook with me. We'll meet up Monday at ten o'clock at the bank.' At ten on the dot, the three of them meet at the bank. Alatriste signs the check for the six hundred thousand pesetas. Berlanga goes to the cashier's window to

get his money. Alatriste has only two thousand pesetas in his account. 'Ay, I'd forgotten. I've had to pay for so many things here. But don't worry. Tomorrow I'm going back to Mexico, and next Monday you'll have your money.' End of story again.[166]

"I have to say that with me he's always been wonderful. He paid me five hundred thousand *pesos* to make a film that I was very enthusiastic about at the time, and then we didn't make it. That's why I made *Simón* for him gratis. And now he wants to give me a house in Cuernavaca."

"Is this gentleman very rich?"

"He tells me he has a lot of money now. He has a ton of businesses, as you know. Furniture is the mainstay of his business, along with one of those tabloid magazines."

"How did you meet him?"

"I think it was in Madrid. No, it was here. His first wife, Adriana Welter, was working in a film of mine—*Ensayo de un crimen*—in '55. Later he married Silvia Pinal. He was married to her when I made *Viridiana*, *El ángel exterminador* and *Simón del desierto*."

"And because he left you more or less alone, they're your best."

"And now he's determined to give me a house. I swear it's true."

"He's quite a salesman."

"And what a salesman! It's strange how things change. Five years ago, nobody in Italy knew who I was. Now they're fighting over my films. I can get whatever I want for them. It's the same story, or worse, in Spain. When Gérard Philipe died, the *Heraldo de Aragón* (Herald of Aragón) published his biography and a list of his films. At the end of the list, of course, they spoke about *La Fièvre* … what's it called, something about going up?"

"*La Fièvre monte à el Pao* [*Fever Mounts at El Pao*]. They called it *Los ambiciosos* ['The Ambitious Ones'] here."

"It's not a very good movie. Well, the *Heraldo de Aragón* said that it was his last film, that he'd gotten cancer of the liver while he was making it and that I had directed it. Immediately the governor called the director of the newspaper, 'What do you mean talking about Luis Buñuel?' So, the article was published without my name in it. Then, after I won the prize in Venice, I got three whole pages in the *ABC* and four in the *Heraldo de Aragón*.… All that for somebody who can't stand people who are self-important."

"They've contacted Barbachano from New York to tell him they want to give you a prize—a Catholic prize—and they want you to go there for the ceremony!"

"Obviously for *Nazarín*."

"Are you going?"

"That's all I need! Tell Barbachano to go himself."

* * *

"You've told me many times that the films where you've had most freedom are *L'Âge d'or* and *La Voie Lactée*." I haven't seen the last one yet, but there seem to be certain similarities in the plots."

"In a loose way. Neither one has a linear plot."

"And the religious references in both of them."

"Right. They're the most religious films I've made: *L'Âge d'or* and *La Voie Lactée*."

"That's why I'm so anxious to see the last one, to see if, in fact, it's the content and not the form that makes you say they're the freest, and the most important."

"They're definitely the two freest."

"We live in times of confusion. Both of us have commented on it. Your confusion: the Buñuel of *L'Âge d'or* versus the Buñuel of *La Voie Lactée*."

"The Buñuel of *L'Âge d'or* is a man who's sure of himself and his ideas, who knows what the goal is, who's found the truth. That's the way it is. There's no other way. So, let's fight against what I hate. I'm anti. Let's fight against everything I hate. It's an unambiguous, resolute film, without the slightest hint of mystery. Very surrealistic, of course, but there's no mystery. My ideas are crystal clear. Not just my ideas, but the ideas of the whole surrealist group, are shown very clearly. Everything that's anti-this or anti-that, anti-family, anti-patriotism, anti-religion, anti-everything, all that is expressed in the most obvious way. And it's very violent.

"Forty years have passed since then, and I happen to be the same person. I have the same beliefs I had forty years ago. I'm the same. I still have my ideas—they've evolved, of course—but today I see a world that's been undermined. Values that used to be positive are now negative. What was on the right is now on the left. The world is at a moment of tremendous confusion. We don't know where we're going. The truth is out of reach, and I don't believe in it anyway. I don't believe that the truth lies in any one place. Personally and intellectually, I'm bothered by people who have found the truth. Found it in some doctrine or some social group or…. And *La Voie Lactée*, since I'm the same person, is ambiguous. At heart, I think you see clearly that I haven't changed, but there are aspects of the film that will make people angry or dismissive, those people who see me as anti. And they'll say, 'Why's he making a film on that disgusting subject?' That may drive some people away even among my friends. I don't think I've changed. I believe the ambiguity of the film is the ambiguity of our era; it's something I didn't even set out to do."

"It's perfectly clear. That ambiguity is the only thing we can still make use of today. Anyway, it's interesting that you're talking about the same things that fascinated you forty years ago."

"You're right."

"I mean, whatever film you make now (because *L'Âge d'or* wasn't your first and *La Voie Lactée* won't be your last), you'll be talking about the same thing, because in forty years of filmmaking, between the age of twenty-nine and sixty-nine, you always begin and end with the same problem you faced early on."

"Yes. Religion and surrealism. The Jesuits and surrealism."

"In other words, the Pope and Breton."

"Right. Even today I still subscribe, totally, to the surrealist ideology. I no longer believe what the Jesuits taught me, but it definitely left its mark on me."

"Christ and Sade died a long time ago, but look how much trouble they're still stirring up."

"My experience with the Jesuits was extraordinary, and it left its mark on me for good."

"By the same token, even though the surrealist group has disappeared officially, their ideas are still with us."

"Right. Their ideas are still intact. They're still operative. The student revolution in Paris [in 1968], was totally surrealistic, totally. In my time, there were twenty-one of us in the group. No more than twenty-one. There was a Yugoslav. There were four or five who were sub-secretaries and…. There was a surrealist group in Japan, another one in

Yugoslavia—founded by Marco Ristitch—one in the Canaries, but, in Paris, we were never more than twenty-one. The students, however, numbered eight-hundred thousand. That's the difference. Where are we going? What is it they want to tear down? Religion, the nation, the family, capital. It's the same. It's the same ideology. The slogans, the watchwords: 'All power to the imagination.' I remember that somebody was talking about Christ in an article entitled: 'A bas la putain de Nazareth' ['Death to the whore of Nazareth'], and the 'putain' was Christ. In the Sorbonne, there was a sign: 'Death to the cow.' It didn't say 'putain.' I don't remember just what it said, but it was a slogan against Christ. It's all so much alike. The surrealists floating between anarchism and communism. In other words, we still have a role. The surrealists have taken to the streets now with the student revolution in Paris. Surrealism hasn't died. And in poetry it will still have the last word, another last word. The group has disappeared, the founders and keepers of surrealism have almost all died, but the world has reacted. The people involved back then are seventy-five, seventy-eight years old now. I'm sure they don't think the way they did when there were all the scenes in Zurich [where Dada took off], but they're still the same people."

"Once again, you've done what you've always wanted to do: in *La Voie Lactée* you've gone back to making a film that's nothing but a series of gags, one after another, without trying to show anything."

"The heresies…."

"Yes, but you're not arguing either for or against them. You're not proving anything. Unless what you've decided to prove is that the Roman, apostolic version is just another heresy. There's no progression in the story. It follows a trajectory, the Road to Santiago. You've made a picaresque film that has the same form as a picaresque novel. Lazarillo deTormes's story just follows his succession of masters. At the end, Lázaro gets married and lives out his life as a cuckold while your two pilgrims go off with a whore to celebrate the word 'end' in the depths of the woods."[167]

"You're wrong. First I made index cards of the different heresies, of all the ones I could find, which were quite a few. The heresies come out of the mysteries. There are six great mysteries. Some are part of the dogma; others spring from the problems, the contradictions. In the film, I look at six heresies. Three big ones: the mystery of the eucharist (transubstantiation), the mystery of the double nature of Christ and the mystery of the Trinity. The three lesser heresies involve the presence of evil (Manichianism), the gift of grace and all the mysteries related to Mary. It's quite a list, and, of course, I treat them in my own way. You know, I don't have a high opinion of Christ, but I think the world of Mary."

"How old were you when you read the *La Vie de Jésus* by Renan?"[168]

"I must have been about seventeen. It made a big impression on me. Especially, the bit about Jesus's six or seven brothers. Now, just for fun, I'm rereading it."

"How did you get the idea for *La Voie Lactée*?"

"It was in Venice, when I was presenting *Belle de Jour.* I asked Carrière, 'What do you think about making a movie about all the heresies?' He was up for it. We went to Madrid and then to the Parador de Cazorla. After five or six weeks there, the first draft was ready. We went back to Paris. I didn't think anybody would be interested in it, but Silberman read it and told me he'd do it. I went back to Mexico for five or six weeks and finished the screenplay. I went back to Paris and we shot the film."[169]

"When was that?"

"In 1967."

"Why is it that when the priest is listening in the hallway, we suddenly see him inside the room?"

"What?"

"In the scene with the virgin in one bed and the man in the other."

"What?"

"Why is the priest inside one minute and outside the next?"

"Ah! Because the same thing happens to me. Whenever a priest talks to me outside the door, suddenly he's inside my room, and then just as suddenly he isn't."

"Are you just talking about *La Voie Lactée* or about religion in general?"

"About religion, dogmas, heresies."

"And you leave politics out of it?"

"I don't think that politics…."

"No, no. Not the police, nor the priests, nor anybody."

"No."

"The only thing that's stuck with you is your early life and your old age."

"Yes. You have to agree that, talking about heresy, it's hard to put the police in there. You just can't."

"Of course. I'm just trying to say what I see here is the eternal return: you go back to your childhood with *La Voie Lactée*."

"Yes, you're right."

"Because back then you didn't have anything against the family or the nation or the police."

"I wasn't against anything. I didn't know what politics were until I was seventeen. It's true. I wasn't against the police, or against anybody, certainly not against the family. Just the opposite: I was crazy about the family although that didn't sit well with the surrealists. You had to hate your parents to be a surrealist. No. But it's true. I've gone back to religion; it's the one thing…. But you could also say the film is about politics and art. I don't know. Politics don't interest me at all. That is, of course I'm interested. I know more or less what's going on in the world…. But I just don't know."

"As far as art goes…. You'd really stir up some trouble if you got into art. I'd like to see you handle that one."

"What?"

"Art."

"Ah, well, art…."

* * *

"Before leaving Paris, I called a few people, eight, to see *La Voie Lactée*. Hernando Viñes and his wife, Manolo [Ángeles Ortiz], [Julio] Cortázar, who comes with two women, real knockouts; he introduced us, but with my bad hearing, I didn't catch their names."

"Go on."

"It's the first time that Carlos [Fuentes]—who is always enthusiastic and full of praise and has given talks, even in Italy, about my films—it's the first time he's kept quiet. 'What do you think?' I asked him. 'I'm surprised. I don't know what to think. I need to see it again.' Cortázar had taken off, so I asked Carlos, 'What did Cortázar say about it?' 'He says

the Vatican paid for it.' You'll see what he meant when you watch it. As far as Mariology goes, I subscribe to the dogma. I love it. Father Peña saw it one Sunday. I asked him too: 'What did you think of it?' 'Uy! This is really going to set us fighting with each other in the Church!' 'There was a Jesuit there too. 'What are the ecclesiastical authorities going to say about this?' His only answer was to point his thumb down."[170]

"They're probably delighted."

"Of course!"

(I show him the letter where María Teresa León, who has seen the film, calls him "Catholic and apostolic." "And Roman," he finishes off, and laughs.)[171]

"I've never been more of an atheist than now."

"I've just seen *Nazarín* again."

"*La Voie Lactée* is more subtle. And everybody, except for the critic in *La Croix* ['The Cross'], has extolled it. The night of the premiere, a few of my old friends got up to talk about it. Aragon said: 'This says it all.' Elsa couldn't praise it highly enough."

He goes back to the letter from Rafael and María Teresa.

"Tell them … tell Rafael I said that, when he reaches our age, he should look in the mirror and think about what lies ahead, about death, about what will be, about what we will become. That he should think…."

"Boy! You must have had fun making this movie!"

"You can't imagine."

"Actually, I can."

"Okay. Tell Rafael—not María Teresa, because she has no sense of humor—tell Rafael that, very sorrowfully, I told you: 'We have to return to the beliefs our parents taught us. We're approaching a point where we don't know what lies ahead….'"

His face is sorrowful, his eyes are cast toward heaven, his hands folded together.

"Of course, you can tell him the truth right after. Rafael *does* have a sense of humor. He'll probably say something like, 'That animal!' or 'That stupid Luis!' But then he'll laugh."

* * *

"I've always sonorized my films myself. Using other people's music, of course, but to my own taste. But for the first time, in *La Voie Lactée,* I've actually included a credit: 'Sonorization by Luis Buñuel.' There's no music, except for a Latin text Dámaso Alonso gave me that's set to a Gregorian chant sung by the nuns. It's beautiful."

We walk around his little garden, closed in by high walls. We see his fig tree.

"I wanted a tree like this for *La Voie Lactée.* I would stand here. Jesus would curse the tree. I'd focus the camera on the ground. The leaves would fall, all yellow. I'd raise the camera and show Jesus on the other side of the bare fig tree. Since there are no fig trees around Paris, Silberman assured me he had somebody in London who created amazing visual effects. I shouldn't worry; it would come out beautifully. The long and the short of it is: after telling me it would be great, we had to leave that scene out of the film."

We walk a bit more.

"It has no smell," he says, referring to a rose.

He loves the vine that covers the tall walls that surround the narrow garden. He points out the wall at the end, which is the highest.

"The neighbors took down the vine. It must have blocked their light. It's a shame. Silberman recently offered to send me to Europe for six months, wherever and however I wanted, so that I could think about a film, whether I made it or not. I turned him down, of course."

I look around at the closed in space.

"I don't like leaving here."

I remember San José Purúa, shut in by canyon walls [a spa in Mexico, where Buñuel often retired to work on his screenplays] and his characters, all shut in too, what we talked about before, about memories.

"No one can escape from himself."

"Yes, he can, by talking about other people. That's why I write novels and you make films. That's the only way we can look out into the world."

I think of the quantities of books covering the walls in my house like a vine.

"But," I tell him, "nobody can really talk about himself. No one dares to. We talk about things that may be interesting, things about important people—Collingwood, Gaos, Einstein, Churchill—but always about things outside ourselves. We don't say a peep about our inner lives."

"Why?"

"I've just said it—because of cowardice. And if that's not true, why don't you try to film your autobiography."

"I'm not Fellini."[172]

"No, I mean it. Nobody tells the truth about himself."

"You're right. You can make an illiterate shepherd accuse himself of wanting to kill his father or his sister, but we don't have to take that seriously. The problem is: a man is never quite in agreement with himself."

"The first thing a man would have to figure out is what he's actually like. That's hard enough. And then we always keep an eye on ourselves, making very sure nothing escapes that would incriminate us."

"Well, for my part, I would spend the time speaking ill of myself—and with good reason."

"But you don't do it. Nobody really writes his memoires. Not Rousseau, not Gide. Nobody does. People cover up more than half their lives. A number of editors have asked me to write my memoires. I've always turned them down, and I'll keep on doing it. I prefer to write novels. Would you write your autobiography?"

"Absolutely not. To start with, as I've already told you, I'd speak very badly about myself. About other people, it would be different. I'd speak well of some of them."

"Even knowing that some of them are sons of bitches?"

"Yes. If they were friends of mine. Why is it like that?"

"Out of cowardice, I'll say it again. Men are cowards first of all, and then, after that, there's the question of hypocrisy."

"But there are men who…. What's messed up is society. It's shameful, horrible. Man in himself isn't evil; it's society."

"It hasn't just appeared out of the blue. I was reading something that Sade wrote, where he insists that God created the earth for evil…."

"No, no. For evil and for good. Ambivalently."

"So you accept the existence of God?"

"No." [Buñuel insists.]

"You think that good and evil just appeared out of nowhere?"

"Why not? Why should it just be a question of God?"

"That's why we don't write our memoires. We can't distinguish…."

"Yes. I'd have too many bad things to tell about myself."

"You've already said so twice."

"I'd start, and I wouldn't be able to stop. I'd say, for example, like Sade: 'I wish God existed so I could spit in his face.' Why make animals suffer? Why make children suffer? With men, now, it's a little different…. They're bad, and they deserve to suffer. But animals … and children. I could never forgive him, if he existed."

* * *

Two very likeable people from Madrid come to see him hoping to reach an agreement about filming *Tristana*. He receives them with a great show of friendliness and gives them good food and drink. He shows them around. He doesn't say No, but he puts them off (the present circumstances make it easier: the state of emergency, the climate of uncertainty, etc.).[173] On the side, he assures me that he has no desire to make the film, but he invites his co-author Julio Alejandro to eat with us,[174] and, from what his potential producers say, it's clear they think that, sooner or later, Buñuel will go to Toledo to shoot the film. I think so too, but he tells me he won't; he always likes to give the impression that he's sure of himself. Not to mention the fact that he really would not go to Spain right now. One of the reasons he likes being in Mexico is the sense of security—as far as that's possible—of the world we live in. Who was telling me that last year he left Paris for Belgium during the student revolts in May and June? It's very interesting that this man, who is so in favor of social revolution of the most violent kind, should take off running at the first skirmish.

"I would make *Tristana.* I like it. I'd change the ending. Galdós couldn't be bothered, and, just to be truthful, I'd put 'Inspired by Galdós,' don't you think that's okay?"

"Yes."

"But what I'm not willing to do is to be examined about it. They'll have to read it and decide, just say Yes or No, and then I'll either make it or I won't."

He's making his position clear. The world is at his feet. He has just turned down half a million dollars. He will make the film he wants and only the film he wants. Otherwise, he's better off here, at home, imagining whole films or perhaps just sequences in his head, by himself. Waiting [for the right moment].

"I'm not going to make any more films about religion or eroticism."

"How about *Tristana*?"

"Okay, but there's really not much of either thing in it."

"Didn't you say you weren't going to make any more movies?"

"I'm a weak man. But I've already told them I'll do it only if they let me have my way. It's not about the money. You know I've just turned down four films that would have paid me at least four times what I'll make with *Tristana*."

On the spur of the moment, Luis will go to San José Porúa by himself for two, three, four days. He never even tells his wife what day he'll be back home. Sometimes he phones.

Sometimes he doesn't. He doesn't do anything special there. He gets up, as usual, at seven, takes a walk, eats breakfast, takes a nap, maybe works, maybe not. This time, he wrote the ending of *Tristana.*

"Do you think," he asks me again, "since I've changed the ending that I can put 'Inspired by Galdós'?"

"Of course, you can."

"Out of respect for don Benito."

* * *

18 April 1971. Dinner at Buñuel's, with Silberman, Fernando Rey,[175] the Alcorizas, who were dying to meet Zapata, the producer of *Tristana,* a Spaniard from Madrid who was middle-aged and from the Middle ages: 'I love the Alps! Oh, to live in Venice!' All that, but when you start to talk about Spain, he comes out with a ferocious nationalism and a passion for green beans with *chorizo* that astound us. There's a violent clash. I let myself get carried away for a moment. "There's no food like Spanish food," he repeats in a fury. I have to rein myself in. Raquel Alcoriza and Silberman help me out.

[Included here are descriptions of conversations at the same dinner with Silberman and with Fernando Rey. Silberman comments that Buñuel "was never a communist. At heart, he's an old nineteenth-century liberal."]

Buñuel insists yet again on his new anti-Soviet stance, derived from his reading of [Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's] *Cancer Ward.* "We didn't know what was going on. We didn't know anything." I look at him with some irony. It's a little late to turn over a new leaf. He knew perfectly well what was going on, but he was fine with the Stalinist approach to organizing the world—as long as it didn't involve him.

Silberman offers to get Buñuel off the North American black list if he promises to make a film for him—gratis—in New York. "Okay! I'll do it." "All of you are my witnesses." "And we'll put Dalí in his place." "That's impossible." "Who knows…. I would show up there with a long moustache." He twirls the ends of his imaginary moustache. I am sure that he would never agree to work in the United States and that he would never make a film for free either. If Silberman manages to get him off the list ("He's nuts," Silberman tells me), Buñuel would make a film for him [paid, of course] here or in Madrid or in Paris—but never in the United States.

* * *

[They talk about eroticism, repeating much of what Buñuel already has said, and then Aub asks him about politics.]

"I've already told you I'm confused about politics."

"So am I. And a little ashamed, which is basically the same thing."

"I don't know what to think about what's going on now even though the problems that make you democrats suffer don't matter to me. They don't matter, because I understand—I understood perfectly—the German-Soviet [Non-Aggression] Pact. Look, sending a few little officials off to Stalin while Chamberlain and Daladier set off to see Hitler … and the business about Hungary and about Czechoslovakia."[176]

"That's all fine and dandy for a nihilist."

"But I've already told you. I'm a nihilist only when I close my eyes. I'm not a democrat

either. I believe in dictatorships. I was a Stalinist until he died. I think later they did a lot of stupid things."

"That's what happened with Napoleon, in France, but the Napoleonic 'N's with their laurel wreaths are still all over."

"Because they were solid as stone. Russia defends itself even though it's still surrounded. After Czechoslovakia, Poland and Romania would have followed. All that's obvious. But a lot of things aren't clear."

"Which ones?"

"I don't know what to tell you about them."

"That's part of the confusion."

"Right."

* * *

Buñuel came back from Madrid last night, and today we're eating dinner together at the Parador. He's the same. I ask him right away about his interview with Franco.[177]

"It was great. He's a terrific guy. He has a vision…. He's a stupendous guy. We spent half an hour talking. The best part came just when I was leaving. He went over to the door and yelled, 'Carmencita, make an omelette with chorizo for Buñuel. He's just leaving.' He's very Spanish, very Spanish."

He likes this [invention] so much that half an hour later he tells me the story all over again, in a slightly different version: 'Carmelita! Carmelita! Fry a couple of eggs for Buñuel. He's just leaving."[178]

He says he has told everybody that I've written a book about Spain in which I really come down hard on Spanish food, and he tells me how they all are outraged.

"Otherwise they like it, but not the part about food! Ducay and Gurruchaga have offered to give me whatever I want to make a film. When you come by the house, I'll show you the contract: whatever I want, when I want and where I want."[179]

"*Chico,* you're like a kid with new shoes, and then you'll turn around and say that you don't like cinema."

"It's true. I don't like cinema. I never go to the movies unless it's to see a friend's film."

"Okay, but you do like making them."

"Making them? Setting the camera up here, then over there. Telling an actor, 'More feeling!"—he comes up close to me—"Let's see. Say: 'I love you.' No, say it with real passion!' 'I love you!' Disgusting. I don't even want to talk about it. That doesn't mean that if I start to get really bored, I won't go to Madrid or to France, to make 'my last film.'" He laughs. "If I do make one, it'll be the one I've written with Carrière *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*: (*The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*).

"And *El monje* [*The Monk*]?"

"I gave [sold] it to Kyrou."

"I'm sorry. I always thought you'd wind up doing it. Who did you see?"

"Nobody. But I went to Andalusia for the first time. I'd never been before. I liked it a lot. Ducay and Gurruchaga invited me. I traveled a lot. I went to Geneva and saw Finkie."

"And his wife?"

"No. She was in Mexico."

"Here? She didn't let us know."

"I think he said here. I'm not sure. Maybe she just went to North America. They have a baby that's just a few months old. She came here with her husband's permission."

We talk about Gustavo Pittaluga, whose throat is in bad shape, and about Ana María.[180]

"I didn't see anybody. The day of the big pro–Franco demonstration, I went down to the gardens by the Royal Palace, the gardens that didn't exist in our time. I saw more than a hundred and fifty thousand people returning from the gathering; about the same number turned onto the Calle del Arenal. There were lots of young people, lots, between about eighteen and twenty. As happy as clams. I've brought you a poster from *Paris-Match*, with Franco greeting them and Carmencita. What a guy."

"From Aragón?"

"No, you know he's not. He's from Galicia, but he did spend a lot of time in Aragón."

"And you didn't see anybody?"

"No."

"Not Urgoiti?"

"No. I didn't see anybody. I saw Dr. Barros, because he's our executor. I didn't see anybody else. Well, I saw Sánchez Ventura one time. As usual. He's the same. He travels a lot, with his son. I didn't want to see Gustavo [Pittaluga]. He's sick. Ducay and Gurruchaga have split up their business interests. I don't think Época Films is doing very well. The money man is doing what he wants to. Conchita [Buñuel] didn't come this time; she's in Saragossa. She has a grand-daughter, a pretty one, and she's crazy about her. My family asked about you. My nephew, Aranda, sends you his love."

"And Ernesto [Giménez Caballero]?"

"I saw a lot of him. I even went for supper at his mother's house. You know what it's like: 'They say that five-hundred captains have gotten together….' 'They say General X has reached an agreement with….' All the gossip. Nothing of substance."

He drinks another martini. I nurse my whiskey. Ailments.

"I'd prefer to be really old, wouldn't you?"

"Yes."

"Except that you might not wake up tomorrow. Imagine, I'd start a film and half-way through—bam! It's a shame, because you see things more clearly, but there's the diabetes, the heart … all that crap."

A man with a newspaper comes over to say something.

"Look, don Luis, they've given you another prize. Congratulations!"

"Let me see. Who? Ah, yes, the Journalists' Association. Thank you."

He returns the newspaper.

"I was wrong about *Tristana.* I said, 'It'll be a big hit in Spain. Middle-class women and old people will go, and they'll like it. In Italy they'll like it too, maybe not as much, but they'll still like it. In South American, they'll love it! In France, more or less.' And now it turns out that the best articles and the most perceptive public have been North American."

"You never know who you work for."

We go for dinner. He drinks wine, making me envious. We talk about the usual things and a little about politics. He's shocked that Moya Palencia and Rabasa are ministers.[181]

"I want to be in power! First thing tomorrow I'll ask to be appointed!"

"Did you see Aragon?"

"No. The one I did see as usual, pretending to be distracted, was Sartre"—he imitates

Sartre, with his wandering, protruding eye; it's easy for him—trying to get them to arrest him for selling his newspaper *La Cause du Peuple: 'La Cause du Peuple!'* ['The People's Cause']. What a shame! What have we come to?[182] You know what it's like now. The business about Poland, the business about Cuba.[183] By this time, we thought that people would work less and live better, and look where we are."

"Yes, it's the same as it's always been. Our times weren't any better."

"I just keep on smoking, and I shouldn't do it."

"Okay. Let's get out of here."

"Fine. Alcoriza is coming at six."

When I get home, the image of Buñuel stays in my mind, of Buñuel leaning on the railing of the gardens that connect with the Campo de Moro, watching all those modern-day Spaniards passing by [on their way from the Franco rally].

The old man is leaning out of a balcony
in the Tower of Madrid
watching the enormous rally
in front of the Royal Palace.
When it starts to break up,
he goes down. He walks closer
to look at the people on their way
back, satisfied, happy
over having seen the hand
of Franco
held high.
Most of them are young,
from eighteen to twenty.
He would not believe
what he sees:
watching his past file by.
To have lived for this!

There, below him,
In the grey of winter,
lies the Casa de Campo.

* * *

"Yes, I am don Lope [the protagonist of *Tristana*]. It's become my story. Very liberal, very anti-clerical at the beginning and then, in old age, sitting at a cozy table, drinking hot chocolate—and what chocolate!—with three priests. And outside, the snow keeps coming down."

"That's how the film should have ended."

"That's the way it did end, but then there was the question of Tristana's revenge."

"It still would have been better—just hearing the sounds of her crutches, again and again, like the drums in Calanda."

"I'm sick of those drums. But I *am* don Lope, sitting down with three Jesuits. On this last trip to Madrid, I was in a house, a residence that the Company has in El Viso for Jesuit writers. They have a lot of these houses. They came to fetch me. One of them, Father Alberto, is writing a thesis on my films. We ate dinner there and argued about my films. They know them inside and out—better than you do! They were very likeable, very natural,

and there I was talking to them, all of us using the familiar form [*tú* instead of *usted*]. Who could have predicted that! They asked me about my time with the Jesuits in Saragossa. Now, my old school has been demolished. What a piece of property! It must be worth millions of pesetas, a huge amount. I told them that in my last year I always had to kneel when I ate lunch. A lie. I only had to do it for five days. The next day, I had somebody tell them it was a lie. The truth is: they're terrific people."

We talk about the possibility of making a film called *Au rendez-vous des amis*.[184] It came up when we were talking about Arrabal and his film *¡Muerte a la inteligencia!*[185] "It's not a bad idea." We talk about Arrabal, and I say that, physically speaking, he'd be a good character for a Buñuel film, and then we go on to talk about which of our friends—the ones who are still alive—could play a part in the film, but the living and the dead get mixed up.

"Breton, impossible. Man Ray, I don't think so, but Max Ernst, for sure, and Aragon, imagine him!"

"You could have a scene between Aragon and Breton."

"Éluard, maybe, and Miró [the painter]. Out of the painters, Viñes and Manolo [Ángeles Ortiz]. Manolo, absolutely. In his day, the Paris press called him 'la coqueluche des salons' [the idol of the salons]. There wasn't a get-together or a drinking session that he missed. He went to bed with everybody. One time he was out in the country, staying in the house of a man who was well known. The man had a marvelous daughter, a dream of a girl. Manolo went to bed with the daughter and then with the mother, who wasn't bad herself. The man found out, and there was hell to pay. He was an important person. He talked to Chiappe, the Prefect of Police, and Chiappe had Manolo summoned. He received him without any show of courtesy: 'You have twenty-four hours to get out of France.' Manolo went to see a lawyer, who told him not even to consider leaving, that he couldn't be thrown out just like that. Manolo stayed. And he's still there. He'd love a part in the film. There's no reason to leave other people out, even if they weren't part of the group at that time in Paris: Alberti, Sánchez Ventura, you and Mantecón."

"It would be great! And Roces."

"What a film! And Picasso. And Llorens Artigas."

"Everybody from the Thieves' Cave and from the desembarcation and the party, all of the *L'Âge d'or* cast that's still alive."[186]

"Yes, but the protagonist would be Arrabal, in a sort of Nibelung role, because he *is* a Nibelung. With that big head and that little body and that beard, he'd be magnificent."

"What a movie! It'd be a huge success."

"This afternoon, at six, a great Mexican director is coming to see me."

"Who?"

"Luis Alcoriza."

"Does he get a lot of offers?"

"Ufff! He gets all the work he wants."

"Is he going to film *Zona sagrada* [*Holy Place*, a novel by Carlos Fuentes] with María Félix?"

"I don't know. When she worked with me, María Félix was a model professional: obedient, helpful, a delight. But now she wants to appear in every shot, to approve the script, to choose the cast. Alcoriza will probably turn it down. They haven't made me an offer, I

mean a serious offer, to shoot a film in Mexico in twelve years. It's not just a question of nationalism. Except with Alatriste, I've never been able to do what I wanted here. It might be different now, but I don't want to make any more films."

"Well…."

"No. I really don't. What scares me the most is to think I might start something and not finish it."

We eat dinner at Luis's house. The Hakim brothers call him from Paris. Jeanne is upset, because Luis refuses to pick up the phone.

"Tell them to write me. I don't talk on the phone any more."

"But I've already told them that you liked it."

"That I liked what?"

"*La Chienne* ['The Bitch']."

"*Merde*. I'm not talking to them. Have them write me in Madrid."

The story is pretty funny. A couple of months ago, [Jules] Dassin was here preparing to shoot *Under the Volcano* (Buñuel really liked that novel, but he could never figure out how to make it into a film). The producers' manager and the manager's wife were with Dassin. The Hakim brothers, who were producing Dassin's film, were anxious to make another film with Buñuel, no matter how much they had to pay him, because they had made so much money on *Belle de Jour*. In the midst of a lot of talk, [Jean] Renoir's name had come up repeatedly, and Buñuel said how much he had liked *La Chienne* back in its day [1931]. I started laughing and said, "Since you started your career with *Le Chien* [sic.], wouldn't it be great to finish off with *La Chienne*?" The executive producer asked if he wouldn't like to do a remake. Because he's so deaf, Buñuel didn't understand the question, and—still thinking how he'd liked Renoir's film—he answered, "Very much." That fellow went back to Paris, and a few days later the Hakims bought the rights to Georges de la Fouchardière's novel. They telephoned immediately. They sent the book, and Buñuel read it. His wife asked him, "Do you like it?" "Yes." And now that they're calling from Paris, Jeanne tells them that her husband liked the book. Buñuel is furious.

"I said I liked Renoir's film in its time, but I've never talked about making that film or anything like it."

"But you read the book, and you told me you liked it."

"What's that got to do with anything? If I had to film adaptations of all the books I like…! Anyway, I've already said that I'm not speaking on the phone to anybody. If they want to, they can write me, and I'll decide how to answer them. I can't stand being rushed! Do it? Don't do it? Let them write me. Then we'll see."

* * *

"I've always thought there's a dichotomy between your way of thinking and what you do."

"You're right. It's strange, but that's what I'm like. On one side are my ideas; on the other, reality. What's absolutely true is that, during the Spanish war, everything we'd dreamed about—at least, everything I had dreamed about—came to pass: burning down the convents, war, murder—and I was scared to death. Not just that: I was against it. I'm a revolutionary, but revolution terrifies me. I'm an anarchist, but I'm totally opposed to the anarchists."

"You're a communist, but completely bourgeois."

"Yes, and I'm a sadist, but totally normal. It's all in my head, but the minute there's a chance to carry out my desires, I run away; I don't want to know. Anything that's not Christian is foreign to me. It's a neat expression, isn't it? I've come up with a lot of good lines. For example, the one they attribute to Felipe II: 'For a culture to make its mark on the world, it needs cannons.' Those are my words. Now, speaking about art, when I say anything that's not Christian is foreign to us, I'm including everything starting with the Parthenon. African art repels me, Japanese art repels me, Aztec art repels me. And Arab art—out with it! It's worse than the Aztec! And let's not even talk about Hindu art. For me, none of that is art. The only art is…"

"European."

"And not all of that. I've never understood the thing about Black art. In Paris, in 1930, I had to say I liked it, but it wasn't true. All that barbarian art … out with it! But, yes, I've made a lot of famous remarks. For example, the one that goes 'I haven't sent my battalion to fight against the…'"

"Condiments."

"I like that! It's even better: 'I haven't sent my battalion to fight against the condiments."[187]

"However, talking about food. You like barbarous Spanish food and barbarous Spanish wine better than any other."

"Of course, but they're not barbarous. The problem is: the rest of you don't want to recognize their superiority. The same thing is true of Galdós. Why isn't Galdós as famous as he should be? I've asked twenty thousand North American professors. They don't want to know! And suddenly, two or three years ago, *Tormento* (Torment) or one of those novels [from Galdós's 'Contemporary Spanish Novels' series] became a 'best-seller.'"

"You're forgetting that we're in 1970 and that Galdós was well known in France, in England and in North America in 1900."

"But how can you compare that with the success of Dostoyevsky or Gorky or Anatole France?"

"The last one, especially, with the surrealists…."[188]

"Put whoever you want on the list, put [Émile] Zola."

"I don't say you're wrong. You're not the first person to say it, any more than I'm the first to repeat it. It's the price of our popularity in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Black Legend of Spain. They wiped us off the map. They consigned us to the inferno. They gave the Inquisition an importance it never had."

"It never had? What do you mean?"

"It depends on your point of view. The Protestant Inquisition was just as ferocious and the Jewish one too. And then there's the intolerance of our dear communist friends…."

"Stop right there. That's different."

"In your eyes, yes, but not from the victim's point of view. In any event, it's true that Spanish literature is paying for the sins of Spanish society. Oddly enough, that hasn't happened with our painting."

"Well, you'd have to figure out to what extent Picasso, Juan Gris, Miró and Dalí are Spanish."[189]

"I didn't mean them. I was thinking about Velázquez, Murillo, Goya."

"Nothing you've said explains why nobody knows anything about Galdós, not in Europe, not in the rest of the world, and yet they know everything about Dickens."

* * *

[Aub apparently makes a reference to the style of Buñuel's house.]

"No, not 'modern-style,' not my house. It's no style. In my living room, I have an ordinary refrigerator. What matters to me is whether the white wine is chilled and the mineral water cold. In other people's houses, the trimmings are fine and sometimes, *if it's essential*, in my films. But, for daily life? No. For daily life, I want just what's needed. It can be good quality, excellent quality, but only if it's necessary. Like what you need for making love. The rest is literature."

* * *

"Deep down, the fundamental theme of all your art is violence."

"Yes."

"It's the theme that leaves everyone stunned. There's never been another director who…. I'm not talking about physical cruelty, but about fury, rage, a kind of emotional violence, about being beside yourself, giving in to an impulse without holding back, about the will to do something, at times, that's irrational, unfair. All of this kind of thing leads me, at a certain point, to watch from the sidelines. But you're actually likely to do something crazy, aren't you?"

"Yes, it's true."

"Without being able…"

"…to stop myself. Even though two minutes later, I change my mind and back off."

"Okay. But those two minutes…."

"The first moment is instinctive, irrational; I give in to violence. Not so often now, but it has stood me in good stead."

"You've felt an inner urge, felt you were beside yourself? Starting at what age? Do you remember?"

"No."

"As a child?"

"Yes."

"Suddenly, because of…."

"Outbursts of violence, yes, exactly, as a child…."

"But was it because people didn't do what you wanted, or because you ran into something unexpected, something that bothered you, or because of physical pain?"

He laughs. "No. It was like the 'crimes' committed in your novels. 'I killed him, because I didn't like his ideas.' A little bit like that"—he laughs again—"yes, a little bit of 'I killed him because I had different ideas.' At the beginning, it might have been caused by something physical or mechanical. Later on, it was because of arguments. When I was a teenager, blowing up suddenly about something, generally it was because somebody had other ideas, or I heard somebody say something about someone that made me mad … and, I don't know, I don't know…."

"And you couldn't control yourself."

"No, no. I'm aware of what's happening, but I can't do anything about that violent reaction. It's like an attack of epilepsy."

"That same violence, hasn't it given you any ideas?"

"No, not a single one. But, I'll tell you again something I find peculiar: I don't see the violence in my films. Oh, sure, if I watch one of my films as though somebody else had made it, you can show me the violence, but I'm not aware of it. It's the same with eroticism. I'm not aware of it in my films. Eroticism. I'm amazed when I read books that talk about the eroticism of my films. I'm amazed, because I don't see it. I'm not aware of it. I always film more or less instinctively. Later on, I may realize what I've done. They can explain it to me, but I'm not really aware of it at the time. And I'm not aware of what my films mean, or mean to some people. Not aware of the eroticism or of the violence. I only see it afterwards. I swear. I think they exaggerate. When I think about it, I tell myself: 'They've built a huge edifice out of something that seems very minor to me, something that seems insignificant.' It's weird. It surprises me to see that they've given it such importance. I'm not aware of it. Eroticism, I don't know, eroticism…."

"I don't know either."

"I can tell you that in thousands of … well, in lots of books, and in the *Dictionary of Erotology,* it's incredible. It's a book this fat, and one of the entries with the most pages is mine. It's incredible."

"That's absurd. The most ordinary Hollywood film is more erotic than anything you've done."

"Well. That's not what people think, because nobody remembers erotic scenes in Hollywood films, but I come out as an eroticist, an erotofile, or whatever it is. I don't know why."

"There's violence, for example, in *Nazarín,* in *El ángel exterminador.…*"

"There's violence in all of them."

"The same thing happens with the political stuff, with your political reactions. When you justify the German-Soviet Pact, the business with Czechoslovakia, the business with Hungary, you justify it on the basis of violence, of fury with the other."

"Because that's violence for a positive cause. That's it. For example, Czechoslovakia, as I see it, was westernizing, not liberalizing. Maybe it was liberalizing too, but it was definitely westernizing."

"You're forgetting that Czechoslovakia is a western country."

"I'm talking about war, Max. If Czechoslovakia were westernized, then Poland and even Romania would follow, so it would end in war. There'd be a new ring of imperialist countries, and that would lead to war, war, which—like every right-thinking person, right?—I despise and detest. The violence you accuse me of? Okay. But a bomb here, five little girls raped there, sixty-thousand deaths, no. That terrifies me. I'd be as scared as a rabbit. So, I don't see myself as being attracted to violence."

"Obviously, it horrifies you, because you're a decent person, but I'm not so sure that it horrifies you in theory."

[They return to the discussion of the incidents preceding the Second World War, basically repeating themselves.]

"So, you think you're not any more violent than the next man."

"I don't know. I think not. In any event, those three political incidents—or accidents—aren't a question of violence, but of what's fair and what isn't. My position seems a lot fairer than the opposite position even though a lot of honorable, decent people uphold it."

"But, in the last few days, you've referred to a few times when you saw violence as the

solution, as something normal. Tell me, for example, about the Huidobro business, because that really was…."

"That's not violence; that's just exasperation. That was fanciful more than anything. I see that the whole thing is getting complicated with letters full of insults, and so I decide to put a stop to it, because I'm a sentimentalist. I don't like getting letters every day from former friends that are full of insults. And I say, 'I'm going to end this.'"

"Exactly what happened?"

"It was when I was in Hollywood. I got a letter from Cossío, insulting me, saying that I was a counter-revolutionary and that *L'Âge d'or* was a bourgeois film."

"What year was it?"

"Cossío, the painter."

"Cossío del Pomar, the Peruvian. What year?"[190]

"When I was in Hollywood in '31, February of '31. A letter full of insults. I was taken aback, and I didn't say anything. When I got to Paris, I called Cossío and took a hard line with him. I told him he was a monstrous dwarf, a cripple. I don't know what all I told him. That I could punch him in the nose easily, because he wouldn't be able to defend himself, that I was much stronger than he was, and that I wouldn't spare his life. So Cossío went to the Dôme, where Huidobro, Milicua, Castanyer and those people got together, and they started writing me letters full of insults: you're a real so-and-so, etc. Castanyer: 'Some day I'll be more important than you, and then we'll see what's what.' Huidobro: 'As you should know very well, my dear sir, I founded surrealism, Dadaism, this ism and that ism,' and I don't know what else. Four pages. 'And even before you learned to read, I had done this and that and the other.' Okay … and at the end, he said: 'But, enough of my autobiography, the next time I see you, I'll cut a buttonhole in your belly'—or something to that effect—'I'll stab you or….' I don't remember what else. At that point, I decided to put an end to it. I went to find them at the Dôme. Hernando Viñes went with me. When I got there, they threw a box of matches that hit me on the ear. I said: 'The fight's on now.' I went back [later to find them], but the only one there was Gilberte, a woman Cossío was in love with. She said, 'Hi, how are things going now you're back from Hollywood?' and so on. 'The group's not here? Don't they get together here every night?' 'Yes, but not tonight. Tonight they've gone to some movie or other.' I waited for them half an hour, and then I left. Nothing happened."

"Well, yes, but you've neglected to say that you bought a pistol beforehand."

"Yes, I did. I bought a sixty-five. I was ready to defend myself and to shoot Huidobro. I might not have actually hit him, because I do a lot of things just in my mind, right? I return to reality, and most of the time nothing happens. Or I throw a cup of coffee in his face, and it ends in a fist fight. That's the most that would have happened: a few blows. But I wanted to be prepared, just in case, so I had his letter in my pocket. That way, if I did have to shoot him and the police arrested me, I could show them that I'd had a death threat. All of it's a little fanciful, isn't it? It's real; it's what happened, but I exaggerate situations; I exaggerate problems. I'm always pessimistic; I make mountains out of molehills. If there's some form of danger, an accident, a situation, whether it involves politics or society or anything else, I always make a mountain out of a molehill. If my wife goes out, for example, and isn't back by seven, I think she's been in a wreck. I always imagine the worst. I can't help it. That incident with Huidobro was a fantasy too. Nothing would have

happened. Huidobro wouldn't have cut a buttonhole in my belly, and I wouldn't have shot him."

"Of course. But in some of the other things you've told me about there was also—at least in theory—a pistol and a possibility of using it. Say, when you-all were waiting for Cocteau in order to give him a beating."

"Yes. No. We kept guard at his door, waiting for him to come out so we could beat him up. That was with Éluard and Thirion."

"Yes, but then later you went…."

"There was something we had to do [later]. There we were, at Cocteau's door, waiting for him to come down. It was when the surrealists were involved in direct action, you remember?"

"Yes. But the group's idea of direct action was getting on a bus and feeling up nuns on the behind."

* * *

The next conversation takes place over a stupendous supper.

"I know that you're poking around here and there, telling people that I'm stingy, that I count every piece of bread. But it just drives me crazy for them to buy seven or eight buns for breakfast when we only need three or four. Who does that help? I've lived off the money they sent me for many years.[191] The truth is that until six or seven years ago I didn't earn enough to live on, not with just a film a year. And at the beginning, there were two or three years with no films at all. And remember, they paid twenty-five thousand pesos per film. If you think somebody could live on that…. Later on, it was different. I paid for most of this house with the money they gave me for shooting *Cela s'appelle l'aurore* [*That Is the Dawn*] in 1956. [Carlo] Ponti wanted me to make *La casa de Bernarda Alba* [*The House of Bernarda Alba*] with Sophia [Loren]. I wasn't interested. On the other hand, I wouldn't mind shooting a film about the plague. The plague is interesting, but the film would have to take place in just two or three rooms. Giono's *Le Hussard sur le toit,* for example."[192]

"Or Camus' *La Peste* [*The Plague*]."

"It's too intellectual."

"What I see is that, either consciously or unconsciously, you wind up inclosing your characters in a space—whether it's an island, a convent, a room, a house—that they can't get out of, that they try their hardest to leave, but they never succeed."

"You're right. Wide-open spaces like the sea or the desert drive me crazy. I don't know what to do with them. I always manage somehow to shut my characters in a room, a country house, in some place where I can keep an eye on them, have them close to hand."

His expression changes, and he tells me, as if we hadn't known each other for forty years, "If I wanted to give you an idea of what happens to my characters, I'd say: Christmas. I mean, all the characters gathered around the fire, close to the hearth."

"Do you believe in inspiration? Or does the sequence of takes make that impossible? How much does the editing have to do with the end result in your films?"

"The actual filming is incidental; it's essential so that other people can see, but it's still incidental. What matters to me is the setting, the script, the situations, the story, the dialogues. The word 'camera' never appears in my scripts. I never have any idea of the set

design or of what I'm going to do. I don't prepare. I never know what I'm going to do in the next scene."

"And you say you don't believe in inspiration?"

"I don't know what to tell you. I'm familiar with the scene. I know what's going to happen. I know what they have to say. But I don't know if I'm going to start with one object or another. Sometimes in a sequence, I realize that there's too much coming and going, so I focus the camera somewhere else, so that you just hear a voice, and then the actor appears, or maybe the other way around, depending on what seems best. But with everything in the right order, already put together, already edited. That's why I don't need numbers, and there are almost no close-ups in my films. There's no reason to get closer than a head-and-shoulders shot. What matters to me is that the scenes on their own say something, do something, that they affect the spectator without making it too easy for him. I don't want anybody left on the set after I've cut. I usually take a couple of hours before I start to think about the scene I'm shooting that day. And I know how I'm going to start, but I never know what's coming after."

"To talk, to communicate, do you prefer images or words?"

"It's not that I prefer it, but in film I can say what I want to; I can't in writing. I don't mean that film is better."

"That's why they say you're a "cheap" director. You don't need many meters of film to say what you want."

"Maybe. I don't shoot a scene more than two or three times. I don't usually bother with rushes. They edit the film with all the takes I want printed, joined together (the first, the second and the third; the first and the second, or just the first), then I just tell them in the editing room: the first, the second, the third, depending on what works best. Deciding how a film should be edited takes me a couple of hours although copying the work takes five or six, because of the repetitions. After that, there's nothing to do but polish it a little. I 'see' the film before I film it even though I get to the set without a completely fixed idea of what's going to happen. And I would never shoot a whole scene from different angles or different distances. No, I just say that's good up to here and cut. I never put numbers on my scripts, except at the end, on the set, for the production people. Later on I may realize that it would have been better to film a match cut, say, but what can you do! It's not that important. Rehearse, yes, I rehearse a lot. With good actors, it's easy. I just explain what I want. With the bad ones, it's harder, because I don't just have to explain, but to act out the scenes, and I'm an awful actor."

* * *

"Is surrealism a new form of romanticism? Crevel and Éluard say it's not, but most other people say it is. In my mind, the question isn't very important, unless they can show that there was one paradise for the romantics and a different one for the classicists, each with its corresponding inferno."

"The difference—it's well known—is that in one emotion overpowers reason and in classicism it's the other way around. The fact that I'm in favor of the first position doesn't mean that I don't recognize the value of reason."

"Do you believe the improvement of mankind is possible?"

"If I answer straight off, without thinking, I'd say 'no.' If I started to turn it over in my head—I'm slow—I might say something different in a few days."

"Do you believe in presentiments?"

"Not in presentiments, but in premonitions, yes."

"They're homonyms."

"I prefer to say premonitions. The imagination comes up with a thousand things, but you choose one, and you're right. It's amazing. You think three thousand things, and you're right three times."

"Esotericism and materialism are opposites, but they come together in your art."

"I wouldn't say 'esotericism,' but 'mystery.' The truth is I hate science. I'm horrified by technology. That attitude may lead me some day to believe in the absurd idea of God. Notice, I say 'absurd.'"

"Did you read the *Zohar*?"

"No."

"Did you take a shine to the *Kabbala*, like Breton?"[193]

"No."

"Do you prefer to explain yourself or let people guess?"

"Let them guess."

"And if it turns out to be the opposite of what you had in mind?"

"It amuses me."

"Can it be said that surrealism was antireligious and atheistic, materialistic and anticlerical?"

"I'm not anticlerical."

"During our lives, we've spent time with conscious surrealists and surrealists who didn't realize they were."

"Like Pepín Bello. What matters to me, what interests me, is the instinct, the natural reaction. The problem is that most of the time a person is bound by self-interest, by social expectations. What can you do about it? That's why the surrealists don't interest me anymore."

"It sounds like you agree with Elsa Triolet when she says that surrealism is 'an old coquette who doesn't know how to age gracefully?"

"Where does she say that?"

"In the prologue of an anthology of Mayakovsky.[194] And she's sure that it was 'a stage of romanticism that is outdated now."

"Aphorisms bother me. They've always bothered me. 'An old coquette'!"

"Maybe you're jealous."

"Maybe. She never came to the surrealists' meetings. I don't like Aragon's attitude now, treating her like another Gala."

"Has Freud had an influence on your work?"

"I don't know. What I can say is that I read a lot of Freud, starting in '23."[195]

"Is the rational approach as big a *bête noire* for you as it was for Breton?"

"Yes. And I was right … even though I admit that sometimes the rational approach is useful."

"The 'spirit of negation' that Poe says is necessary to poetry, was that innate or did it come from your relation to surrealism?"

"It was innate."

"To what extent was surrealism central to the 'reaction' that informed the events that

took place in Paris in May and June [of 1968]?" Do you think surrealism was a real antecedent to those youthful attempts [at revolution]? Or were their efforts surrealist just because they were juvenile?"

"I'm sure that surrealism was central to the 'May Revolution,' but there were twenty of us while there were eighty thousand of them. I can't say I was with them. I saw them, and I couldn't quite believe what was happening."

"'The independence of art—for the revolution; the revolution for the complete liberation of art.' Do you agree? The prescription is from 1938, written by Breton and Trotsky.[196] Or, with the passing of time, have you drawn closer to Lévi-Strauss's pessimistic belief that man is only capable of destroying creation."

"I'm closer to Lévi-Strauss on that. I met him in New York, with Breton. He was an ill-humored man."

"When you look at it from a distance although it's still important—as your work shows—it's obvious that the surrealism of the twenties had its share of self-mystification. Breton insisted that salvation lay in love even if you limited it to the sexual act. Do you agree?"

"It's all a question of time, of the period in question. Obviously, when I was an adolescent I didn't believe that. Platonic love was important to me, maybe as a result of the influence of religion. Later on, it was different. I could never separate love from sex."

"Remember that Breton talks about its 'poisonous shadow' and its 'mysterious perversions.'"

"Sexual perversion is repellant. I don't care about homosexuals. That's up to them. But a person isn't aware of being anything but straight. They repel me just as they repelled Breton: naturally."

"But in your films…."

"I take refuge in humor."

"Like when you said, in an expression that has become famous and that quite a few dummies have taken seriously, that '*Un Chien andalou* is just a desperate invitation to crime.'"

"I did it to upset the journalists. A person is a sadist or…. I wanted to offend all of them."

"You wouldn't say it today."

"I don't know. I'd like to make a film that goes against everybody's taste, against all ideologies. There's already something of that in *La Voie Lactée*. Yes, a film against communists, against socialists, against Catholics, against liberals, against fascists, but I don't really understand politics. I'd like to make a film that would make my nihilism obvious, a film opposed to Christ, to Buddha, to Shiva. Christ was a nasty piece of work. But I'd want to show the blonde, bearded Christ that we're used to, not Pasolini's half-shaved Christ with his eyebrows all grown together. I hate that one. But not the Virgin. The Virgin is adorable, but not an old toothless Virgin like they wanted me to use, no. I'd want a Virgin with her veil and her toga, covering her from head to foot. I don't know who came up with the idea that I'd claimed that the Jesuits taught us to masturbate to honor of the Virgin. That's foul! During the month of Marian devotions they kept a sharp eye on us, especially watching the way we sat and making sure that we had both hands on the table—it was also, of course, to make sure that we didn't pass notes or hold our head in our hands and fall asleep."

"People go on and on about your atheism so much it's tedious."

"I'm the atheist that gets most attention. Since they can't go around saying that I sleep with Greta Garbo or that I flagellate nuns, they talk about my atheism as though it were one of the most important things in the world."

At heart, he's pleased.

…

* * *

"To get Mantecón, when I'm about to die, let's say twenty-four hours ahead of time, I'll have all my friends summoned; I'll tell Jeanne to have them bring a priest, and I'll confess and do everything you're supposed to do, just to aggravate Mantecón, who's the biggest atheist of all my friends."

"Good. And if I go to Spain and they put me up in front of a firing squad, I'll ask for a *charro*'s hat, and before they shoot, I'll yell, 'So what!'"

"What?"

"So what!"

"Fine. It's a question of driving the others crazy without their realizing exactly why."

"These are jokes that only the Spanish understand. Of course, other people have jokes that we usually don't get. But … are you sure it's just to bother José Ignacio [Mantecón]? They say that Salinas, who seemed to be just as much an atheist as you, confessed at the end."

"I didn't know that."

"So he could die, this is what they say he said, 'like a Spanish gentleman.'"

"It works in Boston too. But … are you sure?"

"No. I don't even believe it. I put more trust in Solita and Juan Marichal, who were with Pedro when he was dying. They say it's absolutely false and get mad if you bring it up."[197]

* * *

Buñuel takes a piece of paper out of his pocket.

"The twenty dreams are here. They're very schematic. I've written them up in order to remind myself for you. I can tell you more about them, but there's really no point. All of them are dreams that I've had up to maybe twenty times, at least five or ten times."

"Over what period of time?"

"Over years, the last fifteen or twenty years. First of all, there's the famous train—famous in my mind. I've dreamed about it at least twenty times, something about a train and a station. The train is leaving. I've got my bags—bam!—the train has left me. Another train comes. I put my bags on it. I get down and say, 'I'm going to walk around the platform for a minute.' I lose track of the time. The train takes off. Good-bye to my bags. 'My bags…!' I don't know what I say. I've dreamed variations on that theme lots of times. I miss the train, I lose my bags, I get to the baggage checkroom, and it's very complicated, very bureaucratic, I have to go to another room … and so the train leaves me.

"Another dream: cliffs. Whether it's on a mountain, on the peak, or on top of a very tall building. I'm paralyzed on the spot, with only a scrap of space. It's a very common dream. Sometimes I manage to get down, or I wake up. Fifteen or twenty years ago, I'd

throw myself over the edge, and nothing happened to me. I'd tell myself, 'I'm dreaming,' and I'd jump, but now I'm afraid to jump.

"Here's another one: my father and my mother are alive, but I know they're dead. I feel such sadness, but at the same time I pity them, especially my father. I pity him for being dead, and I have to hide my feelings. And he's at the table, very serious, and I say whatever comes to mind. I say, 'I know you're dead.' But no, [he doesn't believe me]. What a shame.

"And another one: I have to act in a play, and I don't know my lines. It's anguishing, fuck it. This one is very long: I see an enormous room with seats, a stage set, people on stage, but I don't know which part I have."

"Is there an audience?"

"Not usually. Sometimes there is, but more often the audience hasn't come in yet, and I don't know my lines, and I study them, but it's impossible to learn something I have to do right away. The play starts. I take to my heels. I leave them in the lurch. Who can they find to replace me? Almost all these dreams are agonizing. Another one, one I've had for at least forty years, is about fornication, about problems with fornication. The neighbors are looking through the window, or somebody comes into the room at the wrong moment, or I can't find the woman's genitals, or her genitals are closed up. Things are going great, I'm excited, but…."

"The thing about the window is important. The people who…."

"Yes, the neighbors see me through the window. A girl I liked a lot forty years ago in San Sebastián is with me. All her brothers are out on the balcony, and I tell myself, 'That's okay. I've got the girl here inside.' I close the curtains, but I can't do it. No, I can never fornicate in dreams."

"And another dream: I don't have any work or hope of finding any work. Anguish. Desperation. I don't have any work, but, fuck it, I should be making a film now, right? This is a long one, because various things happen. I go out to look for work. There's nothing. Nobody offers me anything. Total desperation."

"That one must be after you came here, to Mexico, more or less."

"Going back fifteen or twenty years. All of these are recurring dreams."

"Because there are obvious reasons as far as the problem of work."

"It's possible, it's possible that … and in America too. It's possible. I can't tell you exactly when these dreams began. They're all from my recent life, starting twenty, twenty-five years ago. Especially going back about fifteen years, I have them again and again. I've had some of them twenty or thirty times.

"Here's another: I don't have any money. In real life, it would be a pain, but I'd tell myself, 'I'll get some off of Max. He'll give me a thousand pesos because I'll pay him back tomorrow.' But in the dream, it's different. I don't have any money, and I'm afraid to ask my mother, since she's already given me a lot, and I don't know what to do. I'm not thinking about taking care of my family. It's just the torture of not having any money. It's terrible.

"And another one: I'm in my childhood home. There are ghosts in the house. I used to really be scared, but not now. Now I get home; I go up to the main floor, which is dark, and I say: 'I'm going to show that I can push aside the apparition or the ghost, no matter who it is.' It's dark. I enter the room and close the door behind me. I'm frightened. Suddenly I notice the signs of a ghost: there's a noise, maybe a chair moving, I don't know what. Then

I say, 'You bastards, you sons of bitches, come out and let me see you,' and so on. I insult the ghosts, but I'm terrified, you understand?"

"Are they ectoplasms or something like that?"

"Yes, yes, but usually of dead people. The apparition of a dead person. I feel real anguish, but I withstand it pretty well. And another dream: this one is easy to psychoanalyze. It's wild. I've dreamed it seven or eight times, ever since I shot *La mort en ce jardin*, in Catemaco. It's a dream about a pool of water; the water's lukewarm, a little greasy, unmoving, glaucous. It's at the edge of the jungle. The jungle starts here, but the trees are very big, and they cover the pool in shade. I'm in the water, swimming peacefully, almost floating because the water is dense, like oil, like I told you; it's greenish, like green eyes. It's the mother, right? There's no doubt at all. I've dreamed about the lake, the trees, the earth, the amniotic fluid. I'm swimming peacefully, but I'm afraid. The jungle makes me uneasy, but at the same time the feeling is voluptuous. It's pleasurable, but it's frightening too. Everything is silent; nothing moves. It's the mother, my mother.

"And another dream I've had over and over: it's about spiders, thousands of variations on spiders. I get to a place with rafters under the ceiling. I go to bed, and spider legs begin to appear [from the rafters]. There are a thousand variations on that one. It's intolerable. There's another dream that lots of people have: wild beasts. A bull or a tiger. I try to escape. I go to a bullfight; the bull gets loose, I run through passageways, trying to get away; the bull is on my heels. I close a door, but the bull is very strong, and I wake up.

"Here's another important one: I'm an accomplice to murder. Some friends and I killed a person eight or ten years ago. We buried him and covered it up. Ten years later I find out that one of my accomplices—I don't know who—has been arrested by the police. They've discovered the arm of a dead man. I'm totally panicked that they'll find out about me, terrified that the police will find out about me.

"And another: an ineffable dream, my only ineffable, religious dream. To the sound of extraordinary music, poignant, marvelous music, the Virgin appears to me, the Mater Purissima. It's the stereotypical image of the Virgin, with her blue robes, her white…."

"Right, the Virgin you show in your films."

"I'm overcome by the sweetest sensation. I seem to understand—emotionally, not rationally—certain mysteries of the faith. This feeling lasts a long time. It's my only positive dream. I've used another one—this dream tells a story—in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*. I put it in exactly as I dreamed it: I'm walking down a street, and I run into a friend, 'What are you doing here?' 'I saw you with Pepito.' 'What do you mean with Pepito? He died fifteen years ago.' 'Oh, you're right, he died, but I ran into him here.' A girl in a white tunic comes along. She's never been my lover or anything like that, but we kiss each other with great tenderness, and later on it turns out that we're all dead, do you remember? I put it in *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* exactly, exactly as I dreamed it.

"And another one, as poignant as the one about the Virgin: I'm with my dog Tipi, a dog I had at home, a stray I loved very much, and he's barking as though he were asking me for something. He's with Jeanne, who's embroidering something, and the dog sees me and comes over barking as though he were asking me for something. When I wake up, I have a terrible feeling of anguish and a boundless sympathy for Tipi. It's a sense of my death, a premonition of my own death. It produces the most terrible anguish that lasts sometimes for days. And I say, 'It's really my death, because the dog died.'

"And here's another: I'm in a public place, and I'm either defecating or naked. You've probably dreamed it too. I'm on the Paseo de la Reforma or on the Champs Élysées, and I'm right there defecating, damn it!, with everybody walking by and me trying to hide what I'm doing, and I don't know what to do, and then I get up"—he laughs—"It's awful. I have a bad time of it.

"And another one: a storm, rain, lightening. I'm looking for shelter. It's another long dream. I'm in the woods; there's a pretty country house with big windows. It starts to rain, lightening—boom!—panic. I look for shelter, but the lightening will probably strike here. I go into the house, into a room with lots of glass, and I start sweeping. Things happen to me. The storm, the lightening, the thunder keep on. It's agonizing too.

"There's another, a good one, that I don't have any more. I've dreamed it maybe thirty times. I make objects or people levitate by putting my hands on them. Sometimes it doesn't work. I do it like this"—he demonstrates and laughs—"you're not going to levitate are you? Shit. I say, 'Let me try this chair, because yesterday I made it levitate.' Nothing happens. My powers fail. But in some of the dreams, I manage to do it. Suddenly, I see the chair rise up three meters. Everybody says, 'That's amazing!'

"Or another one: I'm fooling my parents. I haven't finished my secondary school degree. I'm in my fourth year, and I just can't do it, and I'm the same age I am now. So then I say, 'What am I going to do now? My father's dead, but what if my mother finds out? Well, what the hell, I'm making a living; I have a career, so what if she gets mad.' But the exams are day after tomorrow, and I haven't gone to class for the last few months, universal history, geography. I feel awful. And I say, 'Okay, I'm going to tell my mother to take a flying jump. I don't need this degree; I already have a way to make a living.'

"And the last dream is about auto-fellatio; I can suck my own member. My torso must be very small in the dream, because I can suck myself off without any trouble, but, damn it, I don't take any pleasure in it. It's stupid. I don't like it at all. 'What good luck'—I tell myself—'to be able to just suck myself off, right?' But no, it doesn't do anything for me."

"And is that an old dream or…?"

"The auto-fellatio is a very old dream. I've probably had it six, seven, eight times. Pretty old, anyway. These are the twenty dreams I remember. Take it."

He gives me the list of his dreams, noted down in his own handwriting.

"Everything's there: religion, eroticism, death."

"That explains your hatred of spiders. They must be representations of death for you. Thirty years ago, you could have made a film with these dreams."

"Of course, tying the sequences together, but, it wouldn't work."

"No, it wouldn't work as a film. On top of that, it probably wouldn't fit in with what interests you today."

"Maybe."

"Like your change of opinion about the Virgin Mary."

He gives me a look of such irony that I want to burst out laughing.[198]

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Part II

Interviews with Family Members, Friends and Collaborators

Part II is made up primarily of interviews conducted by Max Aub, as well as an interview with Buñuel conducted jointly by fathers Valentín Arteta and Vicente Allanegui, a letter from Juan Larrea and parts of a diary kept by Ricardo Muñoz Suay.

Alicia Buñuel and Leonardo Buñuel

Alicia is the third born (1901) and Leonardo the fifth born (1910) of the Buñuel Portolés family; he would become a radiologist. (Luis was the first born in 1900.) Since three people are involved, I have used initials to indicate the speaker. In general, Alicia speaks more often, perhaps because she was much closer to Luis in age. At some points it is hard to tell which of the siblings is speaking. When that occurs, I give both sets of initials.

…

AB: "You must have heard that my brother, when he was little, went around dressed as a priest and saying mass upstairs, in the granary."

LB: "I still remember the altar … and the chasuble, with gold embroidery, a beautiful chasuble."

MA: "Who made up his 'congregation'?"

AB: "His sisters, all of us, and my cousins, Araceli, and Antonio and Rafael Sauras."

MA: "That was before he went to the Jesuits."

AB: "Of course. And then, another thing … where we have the kitchen now (I'll show you later) was then the room where the nursemaids stayed. My sister Margarita was asleep. The nursemaids were having supper in the kitchen, which was at the other end of the house, and Luis came and woke up Margarita, who was very little then. She got scared and started crying. Luis hid under her bed, and when the wet nurse came, he grabbed her by the leg, and we actually had to pump the milk out of her. There were lots of scares like that. My brother Luis is bad."

LB: "No, no, no. The thing is: he likes practical jokes, the more offensive, the better. He's been fooling people for years, making them think that religion doesn't matter to him at all, that he's a total atheist."

MA: "So you think he's not an atheist?"

LB: "Not at all. He does it all to fool everybody, especially to fool his sisters."

AB: "To fool his sister María and me."

MA: "And you [to Alicia] what do you think? Do you believe he's an atheist?"

AB: "Well, I think he's enormously concerned about religion. Why would he keep on attacking it if he doesn't believe something? I'd never dream of attacking something that doesn't matter to me. He's just a bore about it."

MA: "Yes, absolutely. It's beginning to look that way, but he's too old now to start making films like *Funny Girl* and that kind of thing. Now what do you really think about Luis? Do you really believe he's bad?"

AB: "Of course not. I think he's a truly good person. He has a good heart. But he's always been a Mussolini. You have to agree with what he wants, do what he wants. Except for me. I've never paid attention to him. I remember the time we went out in the big car. [To Leonardo] do you remember that big Buick when we went to San Sebastián? 'We'll leave at eight on the dot,' he said. And anybody who wasn't ready at eight on the dot just got left behind. He'd go off on his own and leave the rest of us here."

MA: "Exactly. I was telling your brother a little while ago that in Mexico, where they don't know what it is to be on time, he invited some journalists to eat a paella that he made himself. He invited them for one-thirty, and they came at two. He opened the door, grabbed the paella and threw it on the floor in front of them."

AB or LB: "He did the same thing in New York."

MA: "You're right. On this question, he's…. Do you have any idea where this behavior comes from?"

AB: "I don't know, because at home my father wasn't like that. My mother wasn't either. I've always called him Mussolini. The other day he came here, and I said: 'Here's Mussolini.' Because he's Mussolini to a 't.' He gives orders, and I don't pay any attention to him. The others give in to him more. He's very bossy. But good, a good, good person."

MA: "Now I understand why he put on his father's shoes. He told me the story. When your father died—in '23, right?—he was crazy to have some boots with elastic sides."

AB: "The ones with elastic, yes."

MA: "He put them on, but he told me, 'I didn't put them on because of the elastic. I put them on to show that I was boss.'"

AB: "Look, I put those boots on one time too. In those days, when we had lots of money, I always dressed for dinner at night. And the others would say, 'Let's see what Alicia puts on tonight.' And one time I remembered that my mother had a pink dressing gown with a train. It was beautiful. So I put on the dressing gown and a lot of make-up, and then I put on the boots with elastic inserts, and I went down to the parlor. So I've put on those boots as well."

MA: "When he was little, he also had a theater here. Do you remember the theater?"

AB: "Yes, he had a theater that was this size. And he put on a kind of…."

LB: "It was smaller."

AB: "Smaller, about so big."

LB: "I played with it later."

AB: "Yes. A theater. And the figures were worked with little wires."

LB: "The characters were made from cardboard that was cut out and painted."

AB: "And he put on some very pretty shows."

LB: "He didn't let me see them, because I was little."

AB: "Later he used to tell us, 'Let's play café.' And then he made us…"

LB: "Play bar. As though we had a bar or a café."

AB: "A café. And he made us some horrible concoctions with vinegar and I don't know what else, and he made us drink them. A sour drink." …

AB: "He had a close friend, Tomás Pelayo. They came here, and the two of them slept in this room. They must have been seventeen or eighteen years old. They organized a safari one time. They used one of the ancient carriages, with three mules, and they went off with our coachman and one other servant, and they took mattresses with them. And that carriage was like one of the old covered wagons from the West. And they were gone for four days, hunting. When they came back, they hadn't shot anything. They were all covered with wine stains. But as to hunting, they had nothing to show for it."

LB: "He discovered an insect."

AB: "Yes. He was crazy about entomology, and he discovered a new insect. He brought it back, he classified it, and he gave it a name: *Seperuelus pinaris.* He caught it on a hill, close to Calanda, that's called Seperuelo. *Seperuelus pinaris.* And he took it to a friend of his or a professor, Zuazo or one of them. It turned out that it was as common as dirt. It was a *Mantis religiosa,* the praying mantis."

AB or LB: "And another thing they probably haven't told you: he had a pistol with…"

MA: "…with just one shot. And he shot himself in the hand."

AB or LB: "Yes, he shot himself in the hand, and he said, 'Virgin of Pilar, save me!' That's what he said. He was a little boy then."

MA: "How old?"

AB: "He must have been around eleven or so." …

MA: "…Tell me more about him. Tell me some really bad things."

AB: "Bad? No! Not bad. When he was with the Jesuits, he was the prince of students. He always came out with a laurel wreath. In those days, the Jesuits gave them laurel wreaths. He was embarrassed, but he always came out like a Roman emperor with a laurel wreath. As far as bad goes, my mother always said that the rest of us were much worse than him. We were full of mischief back then."

MA: "That's because Luis was your mother's favorite. But tell me why he left the Jesuits."

AB or LB: "He says he left the Jesuits? I don't know why."

AB or LB: "Well, I do know. I think my father took him out. The last two years of secondary school, he took him out so Luis could learn to study on his own, at home, and in the public institute with the other boys. The idea was that that way he'd start getting used to the transition from secondary school to college, that he'd learn to study on his own. He was certainly not expelled."

MA: "I know about that. But in all of this there's a certain, let's say, prejudice. Because it is prejudice, isn't it?"

AB: "Prejudice, yes. But, as a little boy, Luis was much better than the three of us girls, better than Conchita, María and I. We were much naughtier than he was. Of course, my mother was always wild about him. He was clearly her favorite. I remember, during the war, we were in Saragossa, down in the basement, next to the heating system, with bombs falling and me trembling, and the only thing my mother could say was, 'Poor Luis, in Paris.'"

MA: "Weren't you there, on the expedition to the cave? When you-all got lost?"

AB: "That was in Calanda. It was us and our cousins Araceli and Antonio. We went into a very big cave. You had to climb up to go in, and we got lost. We couldn't find the

way out. And then Luis told us, 'Don't worry. If we're stuck here and you get hungry, you can kill me and eat me.'"

MA: "Wasn't Conchita the one who said that?"

LB: "It was Conchita, I think."

AB: "I don't think so."

LB: "Conchita was given to that sort of thing."

AB: "That's just a fantasy. Luis was the one who offered."

Conchita Buñuel

Conchita (1904) was the fourth born. When they were adults, she was the closest to Luis of all the siblings and often stayed with him at the Torre de Madrid when he was in Spain, acting as his "ears."

"The first thing I remember is that—he was very young, probably about twelve—that he took away our toys in order to give them to a girlfriend he had, a girlfriend who, of course, probably was about ten."

"And was named Isabel."

"Isabel Matutano. She's still alive. She lives in Calanda. She's a very respectable woman, but she's extremely fat. In those days, she was very pretty and very likeable."

"And after her, what other girlfriends do you remember?"

"The second one was here, in Madrid. Luis looked a lot older than he really was. When he was about eighteen, he had a girlfriend here who was at least twenty-two."

"That must be Concha [Méndez], no?"

"No, no. It was way before that. He must have been about seventeen."

"Who was it?"

"I don't know her name. She was from here, from Madrid. And since he put on airs, well, her father thought Luis must be from a very rich family, and he asked him…."

"Oh, I know. She worked in a pharmacy.

"No. This was what here in Madrid they call 'a nice girl,' meaning a girl from a good family. Her father wanted them to formalize the relationship, and Luis said yes, he'd marry her. But he went to Calanda that summer, and he didn't know how to break it off with her, so he wrote a letter, pretending to be somebody else, telling her that his friend Luis adored her, but that he had been killed in a very serious accident on a motorbike and that he had died with her name on his lips. And then, three or four months later, her father spotted Luis in Madrid. He tried to chase him down to give him a good thumping with his cane."

"Ha. That's a good story. How about Pilar Bayona?"

"Well, Pilar Bayona's father was Luis's math professor, and Pilar was two or three years older than Luis, but Luis fell in love with her in a platonic way, because of her talent for music. The strange thing is that, much later, my brother Alfonso, who was sixteen years younger than Luis and a math professor, also fell in love with Pilar Bayona. I think he fell even harder than Luis."

"Is Pilar Bayona still alive?"

"Yes, she's still alive, but she has a twisted spine, and so she's shrunk. She's tiny and wears lots of make-up, but she still gives concerts."

"When did you meet Jeanne?"

"I don't have a good head for dates, but it must have been about four years before the war, around '32 or '33. Even though they weren't engaged, she spent some time in my house [in Madrid]. When I went to the station to meet her, I was dazzled. She was marvelous. She was—did you know her then?—a beauty. She was with us in San Sebastián too and in Seo de Urgel and in Madrid, with me. She got married, she had the baby [Juan Luis], and she didn't come back."

"Luis gets along well with you, doesn't he? He listens to you."

"Sometimes he doesn't have anybody to talk to, and so he talks to me about things like films and books and the family. And sometimes I tell him things, and although he may not do what I say, he accepts what I tell him. You have to remember: Luis is very impulsive, and you have to give him time to think things over. Once he was going to sell a property we had in the country, and he said, 'I'm going to give it to so-and-so from Calanda.' I told him, 'Okay, but that's almost immoral, because that's a person who has never worked in Calanda'—it was a judge—'he hasn't done anything. You could give it to the person who has worked that piece of land.' He said, 'No. When I do something, I do it because I want to, and what I say, I do.' But he held on to the letter for a couple of days, and then he tore it up and did what I had suggested. That is, he reconsidered."

"That's called having influence."

"Do you think so? You're wrong, because I've always been the dummy in the family, and Luis always makes fun of me."

"Maybe, but you adore Luis, like your mother did."

"He was her favorite. My mother adored Luis; it's true."

"What form did her preference take?"

"You could see it in a thousand little details. First of all, the pleasure she took in everything that Luis did or said. She was always delighted with him. And later, it's funny, when Luis made *Él*, he sent her a photograph of himself dressed as a monk. My mother, who had always been really bothered—probably because of social reasons—that Luis wasn't religious, when she got that photo of him as a monk—she was beginning to get a little confused about things—she showed the photo to a friend, saying 'People are so critical of Luis, and just look at him here.' And then her friend said, 'My God! That's a sacrilege!' My mother got very indignant. She thought that, because he was dressed as a monk, people were going to believe that he was religious."

"That's life in the provinces for you! On top of that, you had a lot of priests in the family."

"Lots. They've had a good bit of influence on our family life. Not on our way of thinking, but on our daily life. Do you understand what I mean? The ones who were relatives and even the ones who weren't. Who knows how many times they came for dinner at our house! On some Sundays, we had three canons over for dinner; our uncle was one of them. And we called them the crocodiles, because they were insatiable, absolutely insatiable eaters. Every time we gave them more helpings, and they ate even more. And we had another uncle who was a priest. I remember a funny thing. We had a governess, and when I was probably about fifteen I read in the paper that a female fetus had been found abandoned.

I didn't know what a fetus was, so I asked the *mademoiselle*, *'Mademoiselle,* what's a fetus?' She turned red and said, 'You don't need to know.' So I told my sister Alicia, 'Look, there's something in the paper that must be very ugly, because *Mademoiselle* got very mad when I asked her.' We went to look for it, and they'd cut it out. So I went to ask that priest uncle, who was the administrator of our properties, and he said, 'Hush! You should be ashamed!' That was the kind of education they gave us; we didn't know anything. When I was eighteen, my mother still wanted us to believe that babies were brought by the stork."

"It's odd, isn't it? Because living in the country, there's always…."

"But we didn't live in the country. We only went to Calanda for a few days, and they never left us alone or even with a relative from around there. We were very isolated. The governess was always with us in the presence of our friends."

"What effect did the news of Luis's surrealism have in that kind of ambience?"

"The truth is that nobody at home knew what surrealism was."

"But at least they knew that it was atheistic. The priests must have known."

"No, not at all. I don't think the canons knew what surrealism was or whether it was atheistic or not. In Saragossa, talking about surrealism back then would be like talking about the moon now. Not even that, because now the moon is much closer to us than surrealism was back then. And I, who was the biggest reader in the family, had no idea of surrealism."

"And you probably didn't know anything about what went on in the Dalí family, about all the commotion there."

"No, nothing. Life is very different now, but back then we didn't have much to do with outsiders. Sometimes they said Luis wasn't religious, but that was all. Nobody put that together with surrealism or even with the word 'atheist.'"

"Why did Luis leave the Jesuits?"

"He left the Jesuits, because he was so rebellious and he hated that kind of education so much that they realized it at home, and my father gave in. He went to the public secondary school then, and the year he went [Ramón] Sender was there too. Luis was a lot happier than he had been with the Jesuits…."

"And when the family came from Saragossa to Madrid to set Luis up in a boarding house, what happened?"

"My mother and my father came, but not us girls. It was normal for boys who were studying to stay at a boarding house, but my mother was horrified. She thought they were all filthy and served bad food. She couldn't bear to leave him there. Then somebody, I don't know who, mentioned the Residencia de Estudiantes. They went to have a look, and my mother loved it. She thought it was beautiful. She talked and talked about the rooms and the garden. My mother, who was very young, focused on external things. It was the same when she sent us to study at the Sacred Heart or with the Jesuits. She never worried about what we learned, whether it was more or less religious. No. She only recognized one type of education, the kind for people from 'nice families,' where you could see that it was good without having to think about it."

"How about your father?"

"I don't think my father was religious although he never made a point of it—not because of what society would think—but because of us. I don't think it was very important to him."

"What would Luis say about the Residencia when he went home to Saragossa?"

"Luis has always been a little reserved at home and also when he talked about things outside, about meetings and friends and boxing, about things that weren't important. But later, when they suspended him, my father got mad and made him go back to Saragossa. An odd little room was fixed up for him, and he installed all his books there. It's when I began to change my ideas about life, because I started to read his books. I was very young then … eighteen. I started reading Russian literature and then Renan's *Vie de Jésus*, and I think all that has changed me and helped me have a different sort of education, and I think I changed Margarita a little, because she's even younger than I. But my other sisters are totally different; they're religious and even pro–Franco."

…

"And when did you meet Dalí?"

"I never met him. I've heard about him, but I've never met him. I'd love to meet him, because my sister Margarita and I are dying to insult him. I don't know why. It's an obsession. When we're together, we say, 'I'd tell him this.' And then I say, 'Well, I'd tell him that.' We have fun thinking what a commotion we could start."

"He'd love to know about that and—who knows—maybe even to have the experience."

"It's odd. I don't know why we hate him so."

"Well, you've got lots of good reasons."

"I'm a little put off by his false 'originality.' It's so self-conscious, so disgusting, so … all that."

"And also because of the way he's behaved."

"Of course. And then the way he is, so contemptibly pro–Franco."

"But he's not pro–Franco."

"No? Well, even worse, because he certainly gives that impression."

"It's a show. He's as much an atheist as he always was in spite of everything he says and does publicly. And, besides that, nobody could treat a friend worse than he treated Luis. And he did the same thing to Federico [García Lorca]."

"I know all about that, but sometimes I think that, even if he hadn't acted so badly with Luis, he would still be repellant. I don't know why; I haven't really analyzed it."

"When Luis went to Paris, did your mother agree, or did he just take off without telling anyone?"

"No, no. He convinced my mother. My mother always let Luis convince her. She was terrified of something happening to him. At the beginning, she didn't approve of Jeanne. She didn't know her, but she was horrified that he'd marry a French woman, because she had strange ideas about French women and she thought Luis wouldn't come back. But later my mother became so fond of Jeanne that when she wrote Luis, she always said something about, 'Your wife, who is an angel of God, an angel from Heaven who has come down to earth.' She always said things like that, and she really loved her. As far as *Un Chien andalou,* Luis asked her to give him the money to do it and, even though Luis probably doesn't know, I think I'm the one who got her to give him the money."

"Your mother wasn't sure about it?"

"My mother … didn't want to. Film didn't seem like a proper profession to her; it was almost like performing in the circus. When Luis asked her for money, she said, 'Not for film, never, never.' But I told her, "If Luis were a dentist, you'd set him up in an office; if he

were a doctor, you'd do the same, or a lawyer, you'd help him with a firm. Give him this.' I don't know if I convinced her, but she did give him the money, and he made *Un Chien andalou*."

"That's good. When did you finally see *Un Chien andalou*?"

"I saw it as soon as it opened here, in Madrid."

"What did you think?"

"I thought it was very strange, but—even without understanding or being used to that sort of thing—there was something about it that appealed to me, something I liked."

"Did your mother ever see it?"

"No. Not *Un Chien andalou*. If she saw it, it was years later, but I don't think she ever saw it."

"She wouldn't have seen *L'Âge d'or* either."

"No, not at all."

[They talk about Conchita's experiences in her marriage—Orcasitas, her jealous husband, was one of the prototypes for Francisco in *Él*—and during the Civil War. (She was imprisoned in Saragossa for a while.) At one point, she explains that once Madrid was "liberated" (i.e., seized by the insurgents), her mother went to Luis's apartment there (he was in Paris) and took care of his library: "with a friend she tore up his books. She tore up and burned I don't know how many books, all the books she thought would compromise him and lead to his being shot if he were ever captured. She destroyed his library."]

…

"As a child, as an adolescent, Luis liked to dress up in costumes, didn't he?"

"I don't remember his using costumes much at home. Sometimes, as a Laplander, or when he and his friends played they were hunting, as a policeman, and, for carnival, he went off to the bull ring with other friends dressed as old hags, wearing ragged old skirts and masks. I remember that one time in Calanda he dressed as priest. He was very young, fifteen or sixteen. He put on our uncle's clerical clothes. People were sitting outside to enjoy the cool of the evening, and some girls were out that we always called 'the little fatties'—they were the children of poor people from around there. He grabbed one of those little girls—she was about two years old—and he threw her up in the air. People started to scream, believing he was a kidnapper, because back then they used to talk a lot about the 'sacamantecas' [men who supposedly would steal children to use or sell their fat and blood, both rumored to provide many health benefits]. And since Luis was very tall, they thought he was the 'sacamantecas,' who had put on a disguise and was going to steal that little girl. But it was all a children's game—right?—because he was just fourteen or fifteen. I don't remember how old. I didn't know then that he would keep on using disguises.

"My father had come back from Cuba with money, and so people had a lot of respect for him, but he didn't give the money much importance, and he was very generous in Calanda. During the first eight or ten days of the month, he would give meat from the meat market and milk from the dairy to needy people. My father, well, probably the administrator or whoever, handed it out. He also had the slaughterhouse built. And during the flu epidemic [of 1919], he brought a wagon to the village with condensed milk, chocolate, medicine. He always did good things for the village. He even paid for the Procession of the Roses. He wasn't religious, but, well, it was a present for the village."

[She tells how her father got away from home at fourteen, became a bugler, went with the army to Cuba, but escaped the conflict because of his good handwriting.]

"He was never a warrior, never a patriot. I have a card in Saragossa, in his own hand, where he writes, 'The homeland is where your wife and your children and your home are.' … What I mean is that when he said 'homeland,' he didn't exactly mean: 'Spain is my homeland, no.'"

[They talk about the father's trip back to Cuba around 1912–13, and his subsequent return to Aragón, feeling, as Luis also remarks, very let down, very offended. Concha explains more.]

"It was because Casteleiro and Vizoso [the former employees who took over the business] had done something pretty dirty. Later, I think they made one of the greatest fortunes in America. People still remember them. If I mention them to Cubans, they say, 'Yes, of course, one of the greatest fortunes.' And it must have been, thinking of what I heard when I was a child, a hardware store, a very big one, and they had a boat, which, by the way, was named after my mother, that they used for some sort of coastal trade and that went to the United States. I don't want to tell something that's not true, but I got the impression that when our father went back to Cuba, he realized they were using the boat to carry arms somewhere or other. It was something dishonest, something dirty, and he didn't want any part of that; he didn't want them to use his name, because it was something that, in human terms, wasn't right. Politically, I don't know, but in human terms it was wrong. That was when he left the business."

[Aub assumes this happened around 1898, but Concha insists that it was later, when her father returned to Cuba before the First World War.]

"That's when Casteleiro and Vizoso made their fortune, because it was a big business, and with the advent of the war, they'd make a lot more money. They had a lot more business."

"Maybe with Mexico," says Aub, "because the revolution was starting around then."

"It's something I heard the family talking about when I was little, so I'm not sure, but it's somehow related to the war in Europe. The arms weren't going to any place in Latin America."

Leonardo Buñuel

[He explains that as the fifth child, he was excluded from the others' games.]

"And, when you left Calanda, here in Saragossa, you still didn't have much of a relationship with Luis?"

"We did then. We slept in the same room when he was in secondary school. He loved music, especially Italian opera. He learned to play the violin, and he whistled every morning. When we got up, he'd whistle something or other, and then he'd quiz me. 'What's this?' 'Well, it's *I Pagliacci*' or whatever it was. I knew them all by heart, the Italian operas, and he'd whistle them to me. I don't think he was interested in Wagner yet. He must have been thirteen or fourteen."

"However you look at it, Buñuel's genius has transformed the Buñuel family, which isn't exactly a run-of-the-mill family even on its own. It's a pretty amazing family."

"Well, he's had a big influence on his two brothers, on me and on Alfonso, and on Conchita and María (the second born). But he's had absolutely no influence on the other two, none at all. Now with the nephews, say Conchita's boys, yes, he's had a definite influence."

"He's influenced Conchita and Margarita."

"Margarita would only have come to it late, because she really didn't live with him. She's probably spent twenty years without seeing him."

"But I've just seen Margarita, and she's totally 'Luisified.'"

"You're right. She is 'Luisified.' I think she goes to see *El ángel exterminador* twice a week now, so she's seen it ten or twenty times."

"That's true. There's even more reason for Conchita to go see *Él,* since they say…. She says it herself, doesn't she? And Luis told me too that the story of *Él* is about his sister's life."

"Apparently it was inspired by our brother-in-law, Conchita's husband."

"Did you know him?"

"Very well."

"And do you think he was paranoid or that Luis made him paranoid for the film?"

"Oh, he was paranoid all right. Absolutely paranoid, with a persecution complex. He was convinced that we made fun of him, that we looked down on him. He was small, a normal size, actually, but shorter than us."

"That happens a lot, but it's no reason to be jealous of your wife."

"No, that was another problem. He was jealous, but not because of being short."

[Aub asks about a story Luis told him. According to the story, the father had met José Martí in Havana and slapped him. Leonardo denies it, saying there are lots of stories like that which are just impossible.]

"What was true about my father was his tenderness. He could not have been sweeter to us. There were seven of us, and he let us eat, sometimes, under the dining-room table. He made a little restaurant for us. He made us tables out of piles of books, and he let us eat under the table…. There are so many childhood memories that we've repeated a thousand times…. In Luis's films there are tons of childhood memories. Conchita and I went to see *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* [*The Diary of a Chambermaid*], and it felt as though we were back in Calanda, because of the kitchen in it, the cook chasing a mouse with her broom, the horse-drawn buggy on the road: everything made us remember Calanda when we were little."

"How about memories of Cuenca?"

"Cuenca?"[1]

"In *El ángel exterminador* it says you can see chickens [actually eagles] below the latrine."

"Right. In Calanda until about fifteen or twenty years ago the toilets were like that. There'd be a plank with a hole in it on the gallery. And the chickens were down below; you could see them pecking…. In Spain lots of villages had latrines like that…. But not in our house. When my father built it, he had a bathroom installed, with a bathtub and running water. Well, they actually brought the water up in big barrels drawn by a horse. They brought it up from the river. And downstairs in the house, there was a room with an enormous tank and a servant—he was with us for fifty years—who would pump the water up to the bathroom by turning a wheel. Later on, they put in a motor. And after that they put a sewer system in Calanda. But we always had a bathroom in the house."

"Was it about that time that you-all recorded your imitations?"

"Oh, yes! The records. On those records I imitated a flock of sheep. I think the ones in *El ángel exterminador* are a memory of those recordings. First, I imitate them, all of them, and then Luis imitates all of them. We put in every sheep, the little ones and the big ones. It's wonderful, isn't it? And Luis and I also did an imitation of those masses at eight in the morning, the ones when the priest is a little hoarse and the altar boy has a high, clear voice. It's on a record too."

"Yes. I've listened to it with Luis. It's hilarious."

"Well, the priest and the altar boy and everything that's said on the record are all my invention."

"Why do you think Luis likes to dress up as a priest or a monk, and why do the memories of his childhood surface so constantly? I'm convinced that he likes going back to Spain not just to get away to El Pardo or Toledo, but because of the smell of incense that he alone detects early in the morning when he heads off on his daily walks, miles and miles, in the poor parts of Madrid or the Casa de Campo. The Church, with all the pageantry, is an essential part of him. Like so many Spaniards, he freed himself at puberty, but he's never entirely broken that bond."

"It's the attraction of the ritual, the altar, of saying and helping say mass, of the Gregorian chants and the catechism that comes to mind as soon as he remembers his childhood, something that happens every time he takes up his pen to write a story."

"Yes, although sometimes it takes a nasty turn into a celebration of death."

"Ah, yes, the thing about death. Conchita and I talk about it a lot: the idea of turning death into a ceremony, like first communion or a baptism or a wedding. People wouldn't be so afraid of it as they are now. As death approached, all of the friends would be waiting for an invitation from the future dead man. They'd all bring presents: a black table cloth, for example, with a gold cross and a border of forget-me-nots, or a little cushion for the coffin, or—we invented this one too—a mechanism for holding the dead person's feet together, or a purple handkerchief of natural silk for his neck so his mouth wouldn't fall open, a coupon for thirty Gregorian masses, another coupon for a first-class funeral, and I don't remember what other gifts. And when the day of the death arrived, everybody who was invited would show up with their gifts. They'd set the table with the embroidered black cloth, and the appetizers would be caviar and black olives, then as a first course, squid in its ink and civet of hare, and, at the end of the meal, a white cake decorated with the figure of Death and his sickle. At that point, the host would drop dead. 'Congratulations! Best wishes!' They'd put him in the coffin, and everybody would be happy. Just like a baptism."

Juan Ramón Masoliver

Masoliver, Buñuel's cousin, was also a friend of Dalí's and was instrumental in introducing surrealism to Catalonia (he had spent time in Paris, where he met the surrealists and James Joyce). A literary critic, translator and long-time correspondent for La Vanguardia *(Barcelona), he also spent time in Italy and served as Ezra Pound's secretary at one point.*

"You're Luis's cousin. Tell me about the family."

"I'm related on his mother's side."

"Can you tell me who doña María Portolés really was?"

"The most beautiful woman in Europe. An adorable woman. You met her, didn't you?"

"No. I've only seen photographs."

"The Portolés family was from Calanda, and, because of her beauty, María Portolés married the Buñuel father, a man who had made his fortune in America and who was considerably older than she was…. Aunt María was very 'classy,' and a devoted mother. She gave Luis his inheritance to make *Un Chien andalou* and sent him to the Residencia de Estudiantes. In fact, she sent all the boys there. In Saragossa, those boys were the center, not just of the intellectual life of the city, but also of its worldly life. To claim that Luis was a 'self-made man' [in English] is absurd. He has always had as much money as he wanted without giving it a thought. Just like his mother and his brother Leonardo and of course his little brother Alfonsito, may he rest in peace. The girls were beautiful, elegant, modern for that time. And Concha Méndez. Did you meet her?" [See interview.]

"Yes."

"Well, Concha Méndez was the same sort, the kind of modern woman you'd find back then, interested in sport, a great traveler."

"Luis was big on disguises, practical jokes and boxing."

"All of that's true. There are dozens of anecdotes. The story about the desert they set up in the Residencia and all of that, those things didn't come from Dalí or Federico García Lorca; they came from Buñuel, who already had a gang of mad friends in Saragossa that created a kind of Dadaism without even realizing it. He was the one who introduced that style into the Residencia."

"What's this business of a desert?"

"Ah. I thought it was well known. Well, of the thousands of crazy things those fellows did at the Residencia, one of them was this: they wrapped themselves up in sheets and installed themselves in a bare room, insisting they'd been abandoned in the desert. For days and days, they refused to leave the room. And there they were—with Pepín Bello and that lot, four or five of them—living on crumbs, having a hard time, but there was no way to get them out."

"But where was it they couldn't get them to leave?"

"The room. They stayed inside, naked, without anything to eat or drink, saying they'd gotten lost in the desert, covered with the blankets from the bed, and there they were, three whole days until finally, by dint of force, they were dragged out. This kind of act was directed, for example, against Juan Ramón Jiménez, that's to say, against everything that was respectable. They were supported, in all this, by somebody who was a good bit older—Pepe Moreno Villa—when he wrote the *Carambas* ['Wows'] and that kind of thing. So the dignitaries in the Residencia groaned on about the respectability of our beloved education, about all the eternal values. And Buñuel's friends wound up, not exactly celebrating Black Masses, but something of that sort. They were from 'nice' families, well-off families, let's not kid ourselves. They were spoiled kids who revolted against all of that sort of unsullied, perfumed behavior that the gentlemen of the Residencia … that [the director] don Alberto Jiménez Fraud—don't kid yourself about him—tried to preserve, because he was another one who…."

"It's the funniest thing ever, because it was all before surrealism hit Spain. Especially, if you think that it started in Saragossa."

"Exactly. It all started beforehand. And not just in Saragossa. You could find that atmosphere, that mood, in other places where young people congregated. 'Nice' boys, boys from good families, but lefties. And don't forget the crazy things they did in Calanda."

"Of course, *Un Chien andalou* was the natural offspring of that movement."

"I don't know about *Un Chien,* but *L'Âge d'or,* which I acted in, certainly was."

"That shoot must have been one big party."

"You can't imagine. Luis and I had always kept in contact, and the first thing he did when he got to Barcelona was to visit my mother, may she rest in peace. So we saw each other there. 'Why don't you do it? Get in on the film?' I was studying Liberal Arts and law then, so I said yes, sure. I agreed to work in the film. Then he got hold of Otero … to find him some society people, because he wanted to make something related to high society.[2] And we went to Cadaqués. Then he went off and came back with Pepito Llorens Artigas. You could talk to him."

"I already have, but he doesn't remember anything."

"…Well, one day Pepito Llorens Artigas showed me a photograph of himself when he was a soldier. His hair was cut short, and he had a sensational moustache. So I told him, 'You've got to be the prefect in *L'Âge d'or.*' Right? And so on. Pepito came, those French actors came, Pancho Cossío came and who else? That other one who's a painter too, in Madrid."

[They argue but without ever deciding who the painter is. It could be Manuel Ángeles Ortiz or Joaquín Peinado, who both had roles in *L'Âge d'or.*]

"…Dalí wasn't there. He was in Paris, I guess. About that time, he was mixed up with Éluard's wife [Gala], trying to work things out. This was in '29 [1930 actually]. Dalí was the one who'd said, 'Let's film on the Cabo de Creus.' Anyway, he went to Paris. The rest of us went to the Cabo de Creus and—ah!—Buñuel came with Jeanne, who was still his fiancée. Imagine: all those characters dressed up to the nines, in frock coats and so on—right?—on the Cabo de Creus, which is a scene out of Dante. And then Pepito unveils I don't know what the hell sort of monument, and he has to give a speech, a speech which, of course, was silent. In other words, you just see his gestures and so on interspersed with some sounds that made no sense. So Pepito improvised a speech that made us crack up. They had to stop filming five times. The stream of awful things he said with the most serious look on this face as if he were a French prefect—right?—and the cameraman just cracking up, and we'd have to start again. '*Hombre,* Pepito, you're killing us. No, you're great, great, but….' And we'd start again. Five times. And then they had to kill a dog."

"Did you know that the stone that was supposed to be unveiled is still there? The foundational stone from *L'Âge d'or* is next to a Club Mediterranée, and they're going to put a plaque on it to commemorate the film."

"That's great. I'll have to go see it."

"Okay, but go on with the dog."

"While they were unveiling the monument, I was with Jeanne and the dog and a gentleman—what's the guy's name? Pierre something or other."

"Who?"

"The male lead, a guy who's very…."

"The actor. Gaston Modot. I tried to talk to him, but he's totally laid up."

"He was older than we were back then…. He must be over eighty now…. Anyway, Gaston Modot had to kill the dog, because, supposedly, the dog was bothering him. But then Juanita started saying, 'but no … but the poor dog … but why not … and so on.' In the end, the dog just got a little toe-tap. Juanita and the cameraman saved the dog. It was two months old. Juanita had it for eighteen years. It was named Dalú."

"Did Luis give in easily?"

"Oh, no! Luis was determined. And Juanita was having a nervous breakdown. I think that's when he started thinking he'd marry her, because she showed that when she says something, she means it. We went by boat every morning from Cadaqués, and you don't even want to know what the sea was like, because it was spring, around March, and there we were, done up in fabulous outfits, and all of us seasick, disgusting, cleaning up as best we could. There was vomit all over."

"You were an extra?"

"I think they paid me two *duros* a day, apart from the hotel and all the rest, of course. I was a kid about nineteen … not even nineteen. I was eighteen. Two silver *duros*, right? And—boy!—I got to Madrid with a fortune of fifteen *duros*…. We were traveling by train. Pepito was in the upper berth of the couchette, and on the lower berth Lya Lys was practicing with I don't know who, and Pepito started serenading them." He hums a little. "So the film started on the train, and it was a whole surrealist enterprise. Luis offered Lya Lys—who, by the way, was a respectable young woman named Natalia Magurí or something like that—a grand opportunity. She was a Russian Jew, I think. Later I saw her in Paris and after that she went to Mallorca. She stayed here for a while, to see how things would go, right?"

"Did you go to Paris to shoot the interior scenes?"

"No, I went to Paris later on, in 1930 [*sic*], because I wanted to be a diplomat…. Luis was in Paris, along with those other gentlemen—Breton, Desnos, Char and the others. No, I'm wrong. Luis wasn't in Paris, he had gone to America with a contract…."

"Didn't he go with Lya Lys? Because they wanted Lya Lys…."

"No, she stayed in Paris."

"But they wanted to give her a contract."

"Yes, but it didn't happen. Lya Lys stayed in Paris on Malakoff Square or somewhere like that. I've never heard any more about that young woman, or about her making any other films—at least under that pseudonym. That was when they offered Luis a position of some sort with Paramount, and he told them to take a flying jump."[3]

"But then you would have seen exactly…."

"I lived that whole period in Paris to the fullest. Nancy Cunard, Lady Cunard's daughter, had taken up with a black pianist, and they had run away from her family. The family wanted to get rid of the pianist and lock up the daughter, right? She's the one who took *Un Chien andalou* to London. They took off in a taxi, racing to get away. At that point, Dalí was in Paris, living with Gala."

"It's odd. Nancy, whom I met as an old woman—she must have died by now—was the first one to translate my work into English…. She translated poetry too."[4]

"I met her with that black man. He was handsome, but black as pitch. It was a big scandal at the time, in spite of the Noailles who couldn't bear that kind of prejudice even though they were great snobs…. Did you see the famous showing of *L'Âge d'or* at the Noailles?"

"No. I saw it at Studio Twenty-Two…."

"Or Twenty-Eight."

"Twenty-Eight? But then we're talking about things that happened forty years ago. It's crazy!"

"You're the only survivor of *L'Âge d'or.*"[5]

"Of course. Later they cut it a lot, at least based on what I saw, because it was really full of blasphemy. It's still blasphemous, but the original was a total scandal."

"What did they cut?"

"It's better not to know. Jesus as a queer. Jesus as…. The version now is much more palatable. The original was a real call to crime…."

"Okay."

"Now, Luis … we know now that everybody in the family, except for my aunt María, was against him. All that coincided with the Dalí business, 'Je crache sur la tête de ma mère' (I spit in my mother's face) or something to that effect. And both of these respectable families said, 'He's certainly not going to have a career with that kind of behavior' and so on. That's when Luis started doing something that he was pretty embarrassed about: commercial film. Revolting films like *Don Quintín, el amargao*…."

…

"But before that he made the one about Las Hurdes. Did you have anything to do with *Tierra sin pan*?"

"No. I know that he got permission through Sangró in the Ministry and that, in the end, it didn't work out very well…. And with that [*Tierra sin pan*] there was another scandal, and the family began to think that he was only doing revolting things. He had fallen on hard times [but Buñuel loved working at Filmófono and was always fond of *Don Quintín*].

"A hard time that lasted eighteen years."

"Yes, almost until he made *Los olvidados*…. He was—you know this better than I—he was trapped in his relationship with Juanita…. The Luis from back then, from the, thirties and the twenty-somethings, would never in his life have gotten married, right? But then that girl, she was a young girl who was very taken with the world of film and all that, well little by little she trapped him. It was through Jeanne that the family was reconciled with Buñuel, but the marriage for him was unfortunate. Anyway, he has had a really interesting career, hasn't he? The others in the family were more stylish, more elegant. Alfonsito was like Gustavo [Durán], very like him. Did you know him? Very like him, but with the problem you know about, right? But Leonardo, no, Leonardo was … we called him 'the silent one.' He was always involved in his microbes and stuff like that. Well, all of them liked research. Alfonsito went from being an architect to being a decorator. He made interesting collages. Luis's real son was Alfonsito. 'Was,' because he died."

"And was his problem well known?"

"Oh, yes, a lost cause, terrible. I don't know if he was influenced by Federico; that is, I don't know the origin of the problem. But it was out of control, a huge scandal, and it really bothered Luis, who saw Alfonso almost as his son. Luis was the one who had trained him and had infected him with the virus of art and literature and all that, right? The family is exceptional this way. Well, you've met them."

José Repollés Aguilar

Repollés Aguilar was a contemporary of Luis's from Calanda, who traveled widely and wrote a number of books of popular history and other topics.

"Was Luis a good hunter?"

"Yes, excellent."

"Excellent?"

"A great fan, crazy about firearms."

"That's not quite the same thing."

"He loved firearms…."

"Where did that come from?"

"I don't know. When he got to Calanda, Luis had his rifles with him, and he devoted himself to the 'esbarra' of foxes and to hunting."

"What's the 'esbarra' of foxes?"

"The 'esbarra,' well it involves…."

"Because it's a strange word."

"I've been collecting all the words we use in Calanda. They really amuse Luis, along with the nicknames we give people. And he would go on the 'esbarra' in very definite directions, for example, the Barranco del Rico over by the Cantalobos River. His friend Pedro Sauras, who also was involved in his film expeditions, almost always went with him. The foxes are running loose, of course, and instead of the normal way of running them down with horses or a pack of dogs like they do in other places, they just walked around those areas and every once in a while they'd run into a few foxes and shoot them."

"What else did they hunt?"

"Rabbits and partridges too."

"He liked hunting with a rifle, not so much for the actual hunting, not for the idea of killing, but because he liked to shoot…. That's why the "esbarras" of foxes suited him. They'd walk around and suddenly 'bim, bim, bim!' He'd get in two or three shots. What he liked, more than hitting his prey, was the shot, the actual moment of the shot….[6]

"I could tell you lots of stories from here, from Calanda. It's what he really misses. Even in Mexico he's found another man from Calanda, Romualdo Sancho…. Sancho's head of an important publishing company in Mexico. He'd get together with that fellow every Holy Week and on other holidays to reminisce and commemorate Calanda."

"Romualdo Sancho is still in Mexico."

"Yes, he's still in exile. He has family here. One time they made a record of Holy Week in Calanda, recording all the sacred songs, the cadences, that strange singing that Luis likes so much, the famous proclamation, etc. They made a record of it and sent it to Mexico, to Romualdo. And he set it up so that at one of their dinners, he arranged things with the *maitre* so that, the moment they served lunch, they put on the record. Luis, hearing the sound of the drums and those voices that he remembered so well…."

"When was that?"

"Not so long ago. A little before he came back to Spain…. But the good times are with his friends from adolescence…." [He catalogs some of the crazy nicknames.] "It was from Calanda that he got the business about the *balago.* In Calanda the donkey cemetery is called

a *balago.* So Luis, with his strange tastes, used to go with friends to the *balago*, and that's where he got the word *carnuzo*. A *carnuzo* in Calanda is the meat of a dead animal. Lorca and Alberti adopted this word; Alberti still uses it, and it ended up in *Un Chien andalou.* But that's only one of the thousands of associations with Calanda that you can find in his films. The image of Hell is another. We used to go to the clay works where an Arab made clay pots and jugs, and we'd lean over to look down into the oven where he fired the clay. It was like the mouth of a volcano, like Hell. It was impressive. The Buñuels had, still have, lots of properties in Calanda.

[They talk about the different properties, Buñuel's favorites, the main house that was burned down in the war; the Tower, which was partially burned but later partially restored by Alfonso; the botanical garden, planted by the father, but redesigned by Alfonso.]

"Did you know don Leonardo?"

"Yes, I knew Luis's father. I can see him now, sitting at the doorway, in one of the wicker chairs, always dressed in white, with his Cuban suits, his Panama hat, smoking Havana cigars. He was impressive…."

"He was the classic 'indiano' [a Spaniard who makes his fortune in America and then comes back to Spain]."

"Exactly, but also a real dignitary. A man who, like all the Buñuels, knew how to live in a grand style."

[They talk about don Leonardo's first house in Calanda, originally built by a baroness. Aub asks if he made his money in the slave trade. Repollés says the only trade he had was iron—his hardware stores in Havana.]

"What I can assure you is that don Leonardo brought back so much money that in those days it was like the fortune in a storybook. That was when he decided to build a house. It was really showy.… He was determined to build a house that was taller than the church. This is true. If you see it, you'll see that it's taller than the church, which is always the tallest building in any Spanish village. The house was built with a stone base, because the ground here is not very stable. So the foundations are stone, and on top of the stone, he wanted to use a material that was a luxury back then, the famous bricks from Salamanca…. Well, at some point they ran out of bricks and the construction was brought to a halt. Don Leonardo said, 'If there aren't enough bricks from Salamanca, we'll finish the house off with ounces of gold laid on their sides.' That gives you an idea of his money.

"They had a big property too in Saragossa, and don Leonardo didn't mind spending money to give his children the best education. They had governesses, servants … everything."

…

"How about Alfonso?"

"I spent a lot of time with Alfonso over the years. He had the same likes, except for his [homosexual] tendency, of course. What a shame! He liked what his brother liked. Wagner, for example. And we shut ourselves in with a record player to hear *Die Meistersinger* or any other music by Wagner. Like Luis, he was terrified of spiders, and he had the same enthusiasm for other things Luis liked. For example, the *escurzones*.

"The what?"

"*Escurzones*. Water serpents. He was terrified of spiders, but Luis used to get into that pool you've seen on the estate. He would grab the water snakes, tie his shirt together at the

tails and stick them inside. That sensation of the water serpents running down his back and his chest was one of his biggest pleasures when he was sixteen or seventeen. *Escurzones*.

"Alfonso, apart from what you know about, was just like his brother. He always said a crazy thing that maybe I shouldn't repeat, because it's really grotesque. Because there was such a big different in age between Luis and Alfonso—Luis was the oldest of the children and Alfonso the youngest; with sixteen or seventeen years between them—Alfonso always said—and Luis always laughed about it—that Luis was his father…. Since the Buñuel father was so much older than his wife, than doña María…."

"I knew about it. It's one of the things people talk about. The people who know Buñuel really well say he had an obvious Oedipus complex, that he was in love with his mother … like all boys, I guess."

…

"Whenever he came to Calanda, he would climb Mount Tolocha. He liked it best on stormy days, because then—with horrible curses, scary words, violent screams—he defied and insulted the heavens. And from there, as if he were another Zeus, but bound to the earth, he defied the other Zeus, the other Jupiter. He did it with such gestures that it was impressive, and there were such lightening strikes, all around that I don't know how he didn't get hit. Then he'd come down, covered with sweat, take a dip in the Estrechillo, a well near there … and emerge from the water a fresh man. And then he'd start to pontificate."

"Where?"

"On a big rock … a famous rock that's like a pinnacle, near the bridge…. Luis would get up on that rock, and since all the kids in the village knew who he was, they would sit down around the rock, and from up on high he'd give them a sermon. First the sermon, and then politics. It was 1917, the Russian Revolution was underway. He had read Kropotkin and I don't know who else, and he communicated all that information to those ignorant kids, who listened as if he were god, can you imagine?"

[He talks about Vicente Allanegui—see his interview—who shared Buñuel's enthusiasm for] "the *puntuntunes*, who are the Roman soldiers. In Calanda, in Holy Week, these Roman soldiers are part of the processions and the celebrations. They are called the 'puntuntunes' because they are accompanied by the sound of a drum that goes 'pu, tun-tuntún; pu, tun-tuntún.' And, by onomatopoeia, people now call the Roman soldiers the 'puntuntunes.' And lots of people have told me that Luis invented that word."

[Repollés says that Allanegui came up with the idea of Roman soldiers, that don Leonardo Buñuel was one of the first to dress as a Roman soldier, that they are all volunteers, but that don Leonardo used to give each one of them a generous tip, and that the sons have maintained that practice. Later he talks again about the village kids, poor kids with crazy nicknames, who were friends of the young Luis, one—Gregorio 'el Brumos'—even taught him to play the saxophone.]

"There was a young lad, the poorest in the village, who would always wait for the Buñuel car when it went from the house in the village to the Tower, and he'd run behind it. And the butler/chauffeur, Campos, waited for him when he got to the Tower, because, of course, he couldn't let him in the car, and he had him go down to the river. Luis would go down to the river to meet up with him. He must have been four or five years old…. That

little one-eyed kid, Lafranca, always went around with Luis, and Luis would give him a lamb chop, or a snack or a sandwich, because he was a ragged little thing who never got enough to eat. And that friendship lasted for years and years. When the war came, he had to go into exile because he was an anarchist—there was a lot of that in Calanda—with the CNT. Luis looked for him until he found him in a hospital in France. Later when Lafranca returned to Spain, Luis took him his favorite thing, some *cuarteleros*, Tuscan cigars that were…"

"…those long ones."

"Luis took him those cigars, which were the greatest gift he could give to his friend the one-eyed Lafranca."[7]

…

"As I was telling you, there are lots of different drum rolls [for Holy Week]. Luis knows them all by heart. Both he and Alfonso, when they're alone, or deep in thought, will start drumming with their fingers or whatever comes to hand … one of those drum rolls. They all have different names. One is Luis's own creation, and Luis named it. One of them is "The March of the Drumsticks," and another … is Luis's. It's called "They've Broken It on Me, They've Broken It on Me." He loves it…. It's a very strange and very spectacular drum roll."

[He tells yet another version of the story of the teen-aged Luis stealing a child. In this case, it's his little sister Margarita, to the fear and consternation of his family.]

"He had fun doing this sort of thing. One day, for example, he set out some candles, eh? and completely nude, just like Christ, well more or less, he lay on the floor. As you know, he always sleeps on the floor anyway. So, completely nude, his chest covered in blood, a bloody knife nearby, there he was, laid out between the two candles in the middle of the room, pretending to be dead. And, of course, when the maid came into the room, she saw the young master dead. The screams that went up in the house!"

"How old was he then?"

"Twelve…. And every day when he was in Calanda he pulled one of those tricks."

…

"When he was twelve or thirteen, he learned to box, there, in Calanda. In the patio of the house on San Roque, he had a punching bag filled with sand, and he hit it as hard as he could. All the people in the village gathered at the door to watch that spectacle. Now people are familiar with boxing, but back then, in Calanda, nobody had even heard of the sport. He had brought it back from Saragossa or Paris or wherever he had been…. And he was naked, except for a little loincloth. But back then … people still covered up to take a bath. Anyway, if he wasn't exactly naked, the guy wasn't wearing more than some underpants, and there he was, punching away at that bag. Then, when he was totally sweaty, he'd call Campos (Campos is a key character in Buñuel's life; he was the family's butler, chauffeur and confidant). And—even though there was a bathroom in the house—Campos took up a watering can and from up on the gallery, in front of the whole village … he gave Luis a shower."

…

[He tells the story of the young Buñuel and one of his village friends, a kid who worked for the family, both of them big guys, taking turns carrying each other on their shoulders across a river.] "What I'm saying is that the Buñuels have treated their servants, their herders, their tenant farmers and other workers as if they were part of the family. That's

the great virtue of the Buñuels. That is, they've been so democratic in their treatment of people that everybody loved them. While the bourgeoisie always had the village people … [subjugated]."

"But the father was a kind of *cacique* [local political and economic boss], wasn't he?"

"No, not at all. He was nothing like that. Don Leonardo bought estates in the area, because he liked to say, he liked to show off. You know what I mean, don't you? He didn't make any money off of them. Those estates have never produced anything for the Buñuels"—he mentions a couple of exceptions—"but they never had any interest in putting those estates to use. Don Leonardo bought them the same way he bought houses in Saragossa or other things in other places—do you understand?—to give an impression of his power and his wealth."

…

Concha and José Ignacio Mantecón

José Ignacio Mantecón was a life-long friend of Buñuel's. He held various positions in the government of the Republic during the Civil War and later, exiled in Mexico, became a writer and university professor and also pushed to get Buñuel work filming when he was first in Mexico. José Ignacio does most of the talking here, with his wife, Concha, chiming in occasionally. Aub comes in with a question or comment from time to time.

…

"It's interesting. Luis was telling me yesterday that he became the man he is just by chance. When they went to Madrid in 1917…."

"Who went?"

"Luis and his mother, to find him a place to stay while he was studying in an academy to prepare himself for admission to the School of Agronomy. They went to various boarding houses … but his mother didn't like any of them. Then, thanks to the recommendation of either Bartolomé Esteban, who was a senator, or his son Cristóbal, who handled the finances of the Center for Historical Studies, they went to the Residencia de Estudiantes. The mother liked it, because it was so clean. She wasn't happy when she found out that they could come and go as they pleased, but that's what Luis loved. She took one of the best rooms for him, in the first pavilion on the second floor. It cost seven pesetas a day then, a fortune. Moreno Villa and Ricardo Orueta[8] presided over the dinner tables. García Lorca wouldn't be there until the next year, and Dalí wouldn't appear for three more years."

"I've never been friendly with Dalí. I have an aversion to him. I think I've probably seen him three times in my life," Concha joins in.

"When I talked to Alcoriza, and the subject of Dalí came up, he told me, 'Don't mention him to Luis; he'd be insulted.' But the funny thing is: I've almost never had a conversation with Luis when Dalí doesn't turn up with bells on."

"They were great friends."

"Yes, but Federico was a bigger influence."

"The gang in Saragossa, when we were fifteen: Vicens, Buñuel, Dorronsoro,[9] Ugarte and I."

"All young toffs from rich families."

"But not as rich as the Escoriazas, who had the biggest fortune in Saragossa."

"Buñuel told me the other day that his father was taken for the richest man after Escoriaza, but he said it wasn't true. Who knows. The fact is that Vicens, for example, an only child, was very rich."

"And all smart."

"Smart, maybe, but crazy, for sure. We got the notion of becoming vegetarians.

"From 1917 to 1919 Buñuel was prepping at the Academy.… He triumphed in biology and in zoology, so much so that at the Academy they wrote his father to congratulate him on having a son of that caliber.

"They didn't know what they were in for. Between 1920 and 1921 he was a soldier. He appealed to the same Estebans who had recommended him for the Residencia to help him get into the First Artillery so he wouldn't have to go to Morocco.

"He wasn't much of a soldier, and, when he finished with the army, he wasn't admitted to the School of Agronomy either, but he did get into the School of Industrial Engineers, in '21, I think. He did well enough, but he just couldn't wrap his head around math no matter what he did. Instead of studying Natural Sciences, he preferred to go off with Pepín Bello to eat little fried birds, one of their favorite treats. They spent their time like young dandies. It was a pretty dissolute life, up to a point, anyway.

"…He just couldn't handle math, and so he resigned. He went to Toledo one time with Asín Palacios and Agustín Catalán,[10] and they were talking about going into Liberal Arts, and then another day, on a trip to Alcalá with Américo Castro, Castro told him that they were looking for university teachers [of Spanish] all over, but especially in the United States. Luis saw the heavens open, because, at that time, nothing appealed to him so much as the United States. 'Well,' he told Castro, 'That's what I want to do.' 'What are you studying?' 'Natural Sciences.' 'No. You'd need a degree in Liberal Arts.' He finished his degree in three years. He finished it in September of '24.[11]

"…and then that whole business with don Pablo de Azcárate and with Madariaga and the Society of Nations came up, and he'd take up French and English and diplomacy. So, to cut things short, he wound up in Paris on the sixth or seventh of January in 1925. On the eighth, he was already at the Rotonde, installed in Unamuno's regular gathering."

"What kind of mark did the Jesuits leave on Buñuel?"

"Buñuel only studied with the Jesuits for three or four years, in that big old building they had in Saragossa … with enormous rats running up the walls."

…

Concha Mantecón

Summary of a conversation of March 1970.

She tells how Paul Éluard convinced Dominique [Lemort] to marry him. It was in Ernesto García's house in Mexico. Pablo Neruda was laid up with phlebitis … and the

French poet was not in the best shape either. Sitting on top of one of those little refrigerators, Éluard speaks passionately of his love for that good-looking, smart divorcée. Together, the Mantecóns, the Nerudas and Ernesto decide to make sure they get married, much to Éluard's and Dominique's pleasure. There was only one victim of the decision, and that was nobody's fault. Dominique had a little sausage dog that Éluard couldn't bear. They decided to pass her on. Jeanne Buñuel, who was a great friend of Dominique's (it seems crazy, but there was no relationship at all between Neruda and Buñuel), inherited her. She took the Dachshund home and kept her there until one fine day the dog fell off of the roof. Rumor has it that the dog committed suicide. That was the only thing that clouded that late-in-life and, sadly, short-lived union. Éluard died soon after. [They married in 1951 and Éluard died in 1952.]

At the beginning of the Civil War, 18 July 1936, in Huesca, Ramón Acín hides in a closet that's covered with wallpaper. They push an armoire over the door. The insurgents come to look for him, but they don't find him. The neighbors insist they haven't seen him leave. Finally, they do find him. They shoot him without any hesitation. His wife insults the people who came for him, and they take her to jail. At the first Republican bombing raids, they take all the prisoners out of jail, including her, and shoot them. Acín wasn't a rich man, but he contributed a great part of the money to make *Tierra sin pan,* because of his friendship with Mantecón, Sánchez Ventura and Buñuel. The balance, as usual, was paid by Luis's mother.[12] Over the last few years, Buñuel has been returning Acín's contribution to his two daughters little by little.

* * *

"Let's see, Concha. What do you know about Luis's wedding?"

"Luis's wedding…. Luis's wedding. His sister Concha made him get married when she found out that Juanita was pregnant. It must have been in 1934. 'Don't think for a minute'—she told him—'that you're going to have a bastard child. That's all we need! That kind of thing doesn't happen in our family.' Luis went to Paris, he got married and then he came back to Madrid right away."

"When did you meet her?"

"I met her in 1931 in San Sebastián. Or rather, I saw her. They told me, 'That's Luis's girlfriend.' She was very tall, with very long legs. She was wearing a coral-colored bathing suit, and there she was with the family under a tent on the beach."

* * *

[They talk about Luis's adolescent enthusiasm for Concha's cousin, Pilar Bayona, and, briefly, about Conchita Martínez Conde, without adding anything new.]

"After that, he took up with Concha Méndez. I was in Madrid, studying in the high school run by the Sacred Heart nuns in Madrid … and Concha was studying English classes with Mère Patric. Anyway, she came for her English classes around seven in the evening. She had some white mice in the pocket of her overcoat; she had locked them in with a safety pin, and she made a big point of saying she was Luis Buñuel's girlfriend or fiancée. Later on … . José Ignacio and I went on our honeymoon to Europe. On the way, we stopped by San Sebastian and went up Monte Igueldo. On the way up the hill, we ran into Luis Buñuel and Concha Méndez. It was pouring down rain, and they were so mad that they

were hitting each other with their umbrellas. They were furious, wild with rage. Later on I found out that they had broken up. Juanito Vicens wrote José Ignacio (before the wedding, when I was still his fiancée), saying: 'Come join us. I'm here in Paris with Buñuel and'—he may have said Sánchez Ventura too, but I'm not sure—'Luis has had a fight with his girlfriend, and I've had a fight with mine. Pick a fight with yours, and come on.' You can imagine how much I liked that.

"During the war, Luis worked in the counter-intelligence service of the Republic with Sánchez Ventura and Vicens, who had his bookstore in Paris. I'm not surprised that a man like Luis, who isn't exactly a model of valor, or even near it, and doesn't have any reason to be, for that matter, didn't want to go to the front."

"He was horrified by the uprising.[13] He approved of revolution, but only in theory."

"And violence."

"The minute he saw things get violent, he totally panicked and got out of Madrid. There's no argument about it."

"I don't know if he was in Madrid or in Paris when the war started."

"He was in Madrid. I know this, because he was making commercial films like *Don Quintin*, and all that was going very well for him."

[Later on, Aub mentions that he has just received a letter from Buñuel, saying that "he is terrified about what has happened here, in Mexico. The business about Tlatelolco was awful."]

"He's so scared that he's thinking of taking his money out of Mexico. He's told Juanita to make sure her passport is ready, not to let anybody in the house and not to accept packages from anyone. He's terrified."

"That's what he's like."[14]

[She talks about hiding Ramón Acín and someone else in her house when she and her husband were living in Seville. As a reaction to the uprising in Jaca, in December of 1930, near the end of the monarchy, the government began cracking down on leftists. As a known anarchist, Acín was a target. She and José Ignacio hid them for two days before Mantecón could arrange for them to go to Portugal. She talks about her fear at that time and also mentions that a few years later during the war she was imprisoned in Saragossa.

In 1935 the couple returned to Saragossa, because Mantecón's father, who was head of a huge hydraulic engineering firm, based in Saragossa but extending to Andalusia, thought his son was too easy on the workers and wanted to keep an eye on him. While they were there, Buñuel, living with his wife and son in Madrid, visited once.]

"Where was Jeanne?"

"In Madrid. But Jeanne was the unknown wife, because the truth is he never took her anywhere, and the only person who really knew her then was poor Moreno Villa, who visited her fairly often. But nobody knew Jeanne. Luis went everywhere on his own. Somewhere around here I have photos of my cousin Pilar [Bayona] at a dinner for I don't know who,[15] with Federico, Alberti and Luis and thousands of other people … but not Jeanne…. Jeanne was the invisible wife; she spent her life taking the little boy to the park. Luis was very surrealistic and all that but…."

Concha Méndez Cuesta

Concha Méndez was Bunuel's girlfriend for a number of years when he was a student in Madrid. Later she became a poet, was recognized as a member of the "Generation of '27," married Manolo Altolaguirre and founded a press with him.

[Aub asks how she and Buñuel met.]

"In San Sebastián, on Monte Igueldo, at a dance. It was in fashion then … and, as I was living the life of the bourgeoisie, and his family was bourgeois, too…."

"Your family was rich."

"Yes, and his, too…."

"Where are you from?"

"Madrid. We had a summer house in San Sebastián, across from la Concha [the main beach], and their summer house was in the next block. From the terrace of our house, you could see the balcony of theirs."

"And how did you meet each other?"

"Oh, it was nothing special. Buñuel told Miguel Catalán, 'Introduce me to that girl.' I was a good dancer, and I was popular and all that. And later on, that same year but in Madrid, we became sweethearts."

"When I met him, I don't know if Dalí was there yet. I'm not sure. He talked to me about Federico. But I wasn't part of that. I went out with my family, with him and his family, with my governess, so that his life as a Resident and a student had nothing to do with me, and he never introduced me…."

"How long did you go out together?"

"A little over six years, almost seven."

"Up until '23, then."

"Around then."

"You told me once that you used to go to the park with Luis and Dalí and a very pretty young girl—I think she was called Margarita—and that Dalí used to throw rosebuds at her."

"It was all very innocent, sentimental and silly, because of our age, more than anything—well, also because of the way things were back then. They were kids from good families and very puritanical—up to a point, of course."

"And so…?"

"He went to Paris. As I see it, life is a journey, and your family, your friends, whoever it may be, go along with you. You hit it off with some of them, not so much with others. You start meeting new people, you fall in love and so on—right?—and I, well I've had tons of boyfriends."

[They talk about her brief relationship with Rafael Alberti, about her being inspired to write poetry by Lorca and "tutored" by Alberti, all of which happened after she and Luis ended their relationship.]

"He didn't want me to meet them. One day Moreno Villa wanted to go to Toledo, where he had a house, with a group of friends, and he sent a postcard in verse, asking me to let Luis go there for a few days. Me give Luis permission? He'd do what he wanted to. Luis certainly didn't want me writing poetry."

…

"We were on the point of getting married three or four times, and my family didn't want to know about it; neither did his, and they were right, of course…."

"What was your relationship like?"

"Nothing special. A courtship Spanish style, the kind that doesn't let you do anything, the kind that's tedious and awful. That's what life was like here in those days, my friend. You couldn't go out by yourself, and you had…."

"Didn't you go to movies together?"

"Yes, but with my family."

"Always with your family?"

"Always."

"And the stolen kisses?"

"That wasn't so easy, you know? It was hard, a real bore."

"How about him?"

"Ah, well I imagine that he probably got around."

"You never found out about any of that?"

"I was planning to marry him, right? Because that would be, among other things, a way to get out of the house. A splendid way, no? To tell them: 'Fine. I'm getting married. So there!' But, when I really think about it, I realize it would have been a mistake. Destiny did us a favor."

"Yes."

"A favor because I had a future. I'm adventurous. He's independent, and I am too. We had things in common. We tried to get along, etc., but, for me, the biggest thing was getting away from home."

"Did you see each other every day?"

"Every day we could, at the movies … with my brothers and sisters, with my mother, or we'd also go out dancing with friends."

"And to mass."

"No, not to mass."

"Your family was…"

"Church-going? No. Not at all."

[She talks about how she got away from her family, traveled to Argentina and achieved success as a poet. She speaks of her marriage to Manolo Altolaguirre, the press they founded together, her friendships with Lorca, Luis Cernuda and her on-going friendship with Buñuel. The interview takes place in Mexico, in what was Altolaguirre's house.]

José Gaos

José Gaos, a philosopher, taught at the University of Saragossa, then served as Rector of the University of Madrid from 1936–1939, when the Franco forces fired him. He spent the rest of his life in Mexico. His sister, the actor Lola Gaos, is a memorable presence in Viridiana and Tristana.

"When did you meet Luis?"

"It must have been at the end of 1921, when I'd just gotten to Madrid to continue my studies in philosophy. I wanted to live at the Residencia de Estudiantes, but I wasn't admit-

ted; however, don Alberto Jiménez Fraud invited me to come by whenever I wanted to, and one of the days that I was there eating dinner, I saw Luis for the first time. We had already started our meal, the residents and their guests, when suddenly a couple of people came in. One of the ones I was eating with—I think it was Centeno—said, 'That's Buñuel and Dalí.' They stood out from the rest, because Buñuel was in short sleeves and wearing sandals and Dalí had a long mane of hair, a beard like the ones young people wear today and the kind of cape the students in Coimbra [Portugal] use. They caused a certain sensation among the people who were eating, and at one table, waiting for them, was something that seemed absurd to the rest of us: a huge salad, because they were in their vegetarian days."

"And radishes."

"Lots of radishes. A radish salad. I didn't have any idea then who they were and even less what they would wind up becoming."

"Neither did they."

[The interview continues. Although they ran into each other from time to time at the university and later in Paris, Buñuel and Gaos were not close friends; however—according to Gaos—they got along well and always used the familiar "tú" when they talked. The rest of the interview is devoted primarily to a discussion of twentieth-century Spanish art.]

Francisco García Lorca

Usually called Paco, this was Lorca's younger brother. He stayed at the Residencia de Estudiantes, completing a doctorate in literature at the University of Madrid. He spent time in France, became a diplomat, did a stint in Cairo and Belgium (during the Civil War) and found exile in the U.S., where he taught at Queens College and Columbia. Later he returned to Madrid, where he directed Middlebury College's program.

[He talks about the disguises they wore during their days at the Residencia, the trips to Toledo and also how Buñuel "directed" imaginary films in Paris. Santiago Ontañón gives a more detailed description in his interview below.]

"I remember that one of the characters that Luis had on his mind all the time was Robinson."

"Who?"

"Robinson Crusoe. We had a lot of arguments—I was probably the one who got most worked up—over who would be boss if we wound up on a desert island. 'The boss will be the one who's most capable.' 'Don't think that because you're the strongest you're going to be the boss.' 'The one who's most capable, the one who knows how to do things best.' 'The one who knows how to identify edible plants and who's most effective will be the one….' And we'd argue over who would be the boss. We played these games all the time, so when he makes a film, it has very deep roots."

[They talk about the relationship between Federico, Dalí, Buñuel and Pepín Bello, about Pepín's personal warmth, and the importance of his ideas for the group. Aub asks whether any of the group of refugees saw each other in New York after the war. Paco says Yes, but much less.]

"[Buñuel and Dalí] saw each other and so on and renewed their friendship in New

York. I've stayed away from Dalí. He knows it, and if I've seen him, it's just because we've run into each other accidentally a time or two at mutual friends' and things like that. I've always had a certain resistance to seeing him, but Luis didn't, almost certainly because he'd had a much closer relationship with Dalí than I had had."

"When was that—'40, '41, '42?"

"Around then."

"And what was the relationship between Luis and Salvador back then? Did they get together often? Did they get together for drinks?"

"They had drinks with the rest of the group, because they were really a group."

"A group that broke up with the publication of *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*."

"Yes, that was the end of the friendship."

…

"Why did the friendship between Pepín Bello and Luis end?"

"He treated Pepín badly. It must have been for political reasons, because Pepín isn't exactly a model of [Spanish] Republicanism, but you have to remember that the Republicans executed his brother—who'd suffered a brain injury from a motorbike accident—without the benefit of a trial."

"I think they've seen each other a time or so."

"Maybe, but they don't get together often because of political reasons."

The one who seems to think of Buñuel with a certain rancor is Paco himself, but then he's not one of Buñuel's favorite people either.

"So, the closest friends…."

"Are Dalí and Federico. They were great friends, but great friends with Buñuel too"—he says the last with an edge of sarcasm. "Buñuel wanted to make *La casa de Bernarda Alba* as a film at least twice. Once right at the beginning."

"Was he already in Mexico then?"

"Yes. The second time was with señor Alatriste. But the person who was advising the family told us that the money they were offering was ridiculous and that we shouldn't even think of it. I've regretted it from time to time, because I know who Buñuel is and I value that. The truth is that sometimes it leaves a bad taste in my mouth when I remember I didn't give him *carte blanche* with the money and the script. But I wanted to see the script, not to correct it, but to see what they were going to do. Certainly not to straighten it out—I don't know anything about film—but to read it, to see what he'd do with it. He refused. Not to worry; he'd respect Federico's work. I've been sorry about it more than once."

Arturo Sáenz de la Calzada

Although he was several years younger, Sáenz de la Calzada coincided with Buñuel for a year at the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid and later became a good friend in Mexico. An architect, he designed the column on top of which Simon in Simón del desierto *resides and also designed Buñuel's house in Mexico.*

[They talk about various anecdotes during the period when Buñuel was at the Residencia, but being considerably younger, Sáenz de la Calzada knew of most of the anecdotes

only by hearsay. To the question of why Buñuel didn't engage in Dalí's kind of publicity stunts, he answers],

"I think Buñuel is shyer; he's not a big fan of publicity. I remember that when I built the house for him, he told me, 'Don't think that you're going to see lots of movie stars here and so. No, no, no. My life is very simple and withdrawn, so that's not going to happen.'"

"Now, tell me about *Simón del desierto.* You and Buñuel had kept on seeing each other; he talked to you about it."

"Yes, he called me one day and told me he had a problem: he was going to make a film, and he needed to build a column, a pretty tall one, in the Mezquital Valley. In short, he wanted to see if I could help him. So I agreed to take charge of the project, and I drew up a plan for a column that would be, I think, eight and a half meters tall, and hollow. It was concrete with a big capital that didn't really belong to any specific style, but was more or less Byzantine, so that we could erect a platform on top of it that would be big enough for the actor to do what he needed to. We took a few trips to the Mezquital Valley, and the column was built. It was made of reinforced concrete that was beaten afterwards to give the appearance of stone, and it seems, from what they told me afterwards, that he blew it up. I had suggested that he break the base and put a charge of dynamite inside so that it would take off like a comet."

…

Rafael Alberti

Alberti was one of the leading Spanish poets of the twentieth century, a celebrated member of the Generation of '27. Originally from Cádiz, he moved with his family to Madrid in 1917, studied painting, but soon discovered his talent for poetry. Although he did not live at the Residencia, he was a friend of many who did. He became a committed communist before the Civil War and, along with his wife, remained so for the rest of his life.

[These interviews take place in Rome in the summer of 1969. Alberti and his wife, María Teresa León, are living in a village in Italy. Alberti talks a little about his background and his relationship, in Madrid, with friends from the Residencia. He recalls a visit to Toledo, with Luis, Manolo Ángeles Ortiz and Luis Lacasa. At midnight, Buñuel dressed up in bedsheets and pretended to be a ghost:]

"He disappeared in the direction of the Church of Santo Domingo. There was a staircase in the atrium of the church. Buñuel suddenly reappeared descending the stairs, in the semidarkness of the plaza. There was no moon, but a diffuse light came from the windows where the nuns were praying. He appeared in the atrium, and you couldn't see his feet. His hand was like this, holding the sheets, and he was pretending to be a ghost. It was impressive. We were afraid that the guard would come and start shooting at us. That's one of the things that the Brothers of Toledo did. It's the only time I was there, and I was admitted to the Order…."

[On Buñuel's efforts to write poetry:] "I know that it was really hard for him to write and that he suffered with it and that he spent nights, according to what Federico and the others told me, writing his literary pieces [poems and prose poems] with lots of pain and

a huge effort, until almost unconsciously he began to discover his real vocation. He began writing film criticism. I remember that, in '28, he was preparing his 'Goya,' and that kept him busy. It was an enormous screenplay that he put a huge effort into. I saw him sometimes for a meal at the Arrumbambaya or La Granja, carting around this long screenplay. He'd appear with it tucked under his arm. I think it was a film he never made."[16]

"It was an official commission."

"But it was an enormous screenplay, the biography of Goya. He had a huge pile of pages. He was studying everything in detail, with intense interest; he wanted to make a great film. Then suddenly he turned up with *Un Chien andalou,* and that other idea, from an earlier life, just went up in smoke."

…

"…I went with Buñuel when he made *Tierra sin pan*…."

"That was in '32."[17]

"Dalí wasn't there. He and Buñuel had had a falling out. It was a late stage in the Brothers of Toledo business. I went with Luis, Pierre Unik and Eli Lotar on a trip they took to Las Hurdes, when Luis was making plans for the film, not at the time he filmed it. I remember I went with Gustavo Durán. Luis already knew that area well, and he was the one who drove us. He knew the poorest parts, where the children dipped their bread in the water that the pigs rooted around in. It was when the thing happened with the bees, those wild, furious bees that sucked bitter flowers and attacked people. The ones that are in the sequence when they just leave a skeleton of the donkey, and all that and the thing about the goat. That trip was to draw up the main lines of the film. I know all about its early stages. Afterwards I find out that Buñuel is living in Madrid, making some mysterious, commercial films, and every once in a while, I eat with him at the Arrumbambaya, but I really see very little of him."

"Did you see him during the war?"

"At the beginning, a number of times: in the patio of the Alianza de Intelectuales and in the Palace of the Heredia Spíndola family, which we [communists] would soon confiscate. When I got to Madrid from Ibiza, which was in August, Buñuel was already making plans to get out. He was going on a mission—he never really explained what it was—a mysterious mission. Later, when I passed through Paris on my way to the Soviet Union, in '37, I ran into him. I ate with him and … somebody else."

…

"You never acted in any of Buñuel's films?"

"No."

"You should do it. You'd make a marvelous bishop. Buñuel's perpetual bishop. He always uses his friends and the same actors, whether they're good or bad, always the same ones. And now that Martínez Baena, who was bishop forever, has died, he'd be delighted if you stepped in."[18]

"I love all that ecclesiastical business, just like him. I think that, at heart, Buñuel is not just religious, but a complete Catholic who believes in Hell and has nighttime terrors."

"Does he believe in Heaven or just in Hell"¨

"Buñuel?"

"Yes."

"I think he believes in Hell."

"But not in Heaven?"

"I've never really thought about it. But he's very concerned about religion, and that concern is central to all his films: *Nazarín, Viridiana*…."

"Not just religion, but also everything related to the Catholic Church, the ecclestical things."

"The man who makes films like he does is somebody who has been formed, like me, by the Jesuits…. When we want to be sincere with ourselves, we know we have this feeling for the Church in our very blood. And Buñuel has had the guts to take that out and show it. He shows it, because it runs through his every vein…. It's really interesting that the person who seems the most innovative, who is in the absolute vanguard of our art, should be so fixated on the oldest things. He has the same concerns as a pious old woman from the provinces. And then he presents them in a way that people don't normally see.

"…This obsession on his part is so fantastic that I understand it perfectly, because if I let myself follow the way I was brought up…. We can never get away from it, no matter how much Marxism we throw at it, no matter how much revolution we heap on top of it. These are things that, especially in Spain, are in our very bones, right? If you think about it, it's shocking that Buñuel has the sincerity and the nerve to expose all this. But he does it fearfully. I think he's afraid of committing a sacrilege."

"He's afraid of everything. Maybe it explains a lot of what he does. The fear that's stayed with him since childhood. The sense of guilt."

Santiago Ontañón

Ontañón, a painter and set designer from Santander, was one of the group of Spaniards with whom Buñuel spent his time when he first arrived in Paris.

…

"Buñuel was part of our regular group, and we got together at La Rotonde, or the Jockey or the Closerie des Lilas. And, as you know very well, he liked the detective game, the one in which everybody is a famous detective: Nick Carter, Sherlock Holmes, Okito (a Japanese)…. We'd invent a crime. One of us would explain the plot. There was always another policeman who'd laugh ironically and say, 'You're so naïve. That's something I cooked up myself.' And there was always a fight between the detectives, but always staying in character, and we'd see how they destroyed each other over the crime. And often it ended in a bloodbath, and the story was never resolved. Another game that he liked a lot was to write a chapter of a novel 'in the style of….' This probably came from the Residencia de Estudiantes, no? So, somebody would write a chapter in the style of Baroja, for example. One of us would write the beginning of a story, and the next one would have to keep it going and so on. And Buñuel loved it when his turn came, because he'd always kill the protagonist and everybody else, and that was the end of the novel. As you know, he was compelling. Back then he had an almost physical energy, like a freight train, right? Let's say, for example, that we had gotten together in the basement of the Select. He'd say, 'Let's talk about poetry for half an hour.' So, like dummies, we'd all start talking about poetry, and suddenly he'd say, 'Okay. That's enough,' because exactly half an hour had passed. And then

we'd say, 'Okay, why don't we go somewhere else ?' 'No, no, no.' Not everybody would listen to him, but…. Then suddenly he'd say, 'Fine, let's go.' And he'd do that sort of thing, he'd make an elephantine movement, and we'd all follow him out. He was a force of nature, right? That was when he started thinking about film, about making a film. Because you know he was a rich kid. He was always a rich kid from Saragossa. At first he had the idea of making a film about the life of a newspaper, the *ABC*, about making it here [in Madrid], but that sort of fell apart because I don't remember who made it…. I think it was called *Rien que les heures* [*Nothing But Time*]."

[Ontañón and Aub argue over the name of the film about a day in the life of Paris, the director and the author. Ontañon is correct about the title, but confused about the director and writer. Alberto Cavalcanti did both. The film, Ontañón says], "was the history of a city from dawn until everything was shut up…. In reality, it was the same idea Buñuel had, and that made him change his mind, because it would seem that he was plagiarizing."[19]

"That was when he decided to make 'Goya.' And, of course, after that, he was always going on about his 'Goya.' And then we played that he was the director. So we'd go down to the cellar of the Select, and he'd start puffing and telling us what to do. 'Okay, I'm the director' and so on. And whoever won, as best actor, Buñuel would buy a manhattan. They cost seven francs then, which was a lot for us. The prize was a manhattan. So, we'd act out scenes. The ones who acted were Castanyer, Hortelano, Paquito García Lorca, Manolo Angeles Ortiz, Diego Buigas, who did it quite a lot, and I.[20] The best one—almost always either Paquito García Lorca or I—won. We were the ones who got the cocktails…. He was totally serious about it, you know? Buñuel: 'Now, you go out, and then you come to a social gathering, an elegant party. You come in. From the doorway, you spot the hostess, the owner of the house. You greet her with a bow. Later a little boy appears; you greet him too …' and so on. You had to enter and greet somebody from a distance; an imaginary child came, and you had to pat him on the head and so on. And he was enjoying all that, having a great time. Then there was the big film he wanted to make. It was odd, because Emily Brontë was almost unknown in Spain."

"Who?"

"Emily Brontë, who wrote *Wuthering Heights.* I remember that he was enthusiastic about the novel, which in France was called *Les Hauts de Hurle-Vent*…. I think he made it later in Mexico and not very well."[21]

"The two last rolls are terrific."

"They are good, aren't they? That was the film he was thinking about. Later, I had to come back to Spain, and that's when he made *Un Chien andalou.* I wasn't in Paris when it happened."

"When he wanted to make 'El periódico' ['The Newspaper'], did he talk to you about Ramón Gómez de la Serna?"

"Ramón Gómez de la Serna? I don't remember. It's possible, because he was very Ramonesque. He was a greater admirer of Ramón. Maybe he talked about him in relation to 'Goya.'"

"No. Ramón's *Goya* is much later. He definitely worked with Ramón Gómez de la Serna on the newspaper movie. They were going to do it, using Ramón's gags and his stories."

"Right."

"Then he dumped Ramón—he tells the story himself—because Dalí called him. Buñuel

says, 'I'm going to make "El periódico."' And Dalí sends him, written on a shoe box, the idea for *Un Chien andalou.*"[22]

"I never believed that Dalí was so important in *Un Chien andalou.*"

"He was."

"Because in *Un Chien andalou,* there's much more Pepín Bello than Dalí. All the theory of the *carnuzo* and the dead donkeys and all that, they were part of the obsessive ideas Pepín had."

"Starting when?"

"From the days of the Residencia."

"Were you there?"

"No, but I've heard them all—Federico and everybody—talk about the *carnuzo*, the theory of the *carnuzo*. The theory of the *carnuzo* comes out in the film, doesn't it? The rotten bourgeoisie, the 'nice' families … what we're all against: tradition, the old reactionary gentlemen. All that. It seems to me that saying 'a *carnuzo*'—a piece of dead meat—is something ineffable, no? In other words, a *carnuzo* was a gentleman who represented everything we hated. That's why the donkeys appear in *Un Chien andalou,* the dead donkeys, the *carnuzos* on top of the piano, the same way the Tablets of the Law and the Marist Brothers and our religious education and all that come out in the film. But a lot of that was Pepín. And then there's a gag, the most famous one in the film, which was totally Moreno Villa."

"Which one?"

"The one about the cloud and the eye."

"Are you sure?"

"Very sure."

"You amaze me, because I've heard a lot of versions, including Luis's own, about how he and Dalí made it based on their own dreams."

"Well, what I've heard—and I'm not sure who told me; it was a Resident, maybe Federico himself—is that one day at breakfast in the Residencia, Moreno Villa was very affected because he had dreamed that he was shaving himself with a straight razor and slashed his eye. Everybody was very shaken by the idea, and later it turned up in the film…. The idea of the eye, the terrible slit eye with the viscous mass spilling out, that was Moreno Villa's."

"And the ants?"

"I don't know."

"It's Dalí's."

"Dalí's. Fine. Even if it's not Dalí's, he's done it a lot in his paintings. He painted a lot of ants after that, didn't he? Here's a curious detail from Buñuel's cinema: I remember that one day we went to Les Ursulines to see a film that Joseph von Stroheim had made before *The Merry Widow.* We went there, thinking we'd see an ordinary movie, and suddenly both of us started to get really disgusted with the film, and we left the theater in a huff. We were walking toward the Rotonde, talking: '*Chico*, everything in that film is disgusting, even the sea is disgusting,' and so on. And suddenly, after talking and talking, it dawned on us that the film was brilliant, that we were imbeciles, that we'd left the theater because we didn't understand the film. That is, we just hadn't grasped what he had in mind…. It was *Greed.*"

"Yes."

"Do you remember it?"

"Of course."

"It's about a man who falls in love when he sees a woman's rotten teeth. He gives her chloroform when he kisses her. Later they get engaged. They take a walk beside the sea, but the place they sit down is where the city drains empty. It was an incredible film, done with a certain malice on Stroheim's part—right?—in order to make everything noble seem repugnant. And Buñuel and I were walking along talking about it. When we got to rue Vaugirard, near Vavin and that area, he says, 'Hey, wait! Listen! We missed the point. The film's good.' And so on. We went back the next day, and then it really impressed us. It was magnificent."

"Did he ever talk to you about Lang's *Destiny*?"

"Well, yes. At that time it had a big impact on all of us. A lot of stuff in the film is mysterious. It was a fundamental film, with lots of photography and…"

"Death."

"Yes, of course. It had a big impact on all of us, because it was about the time of *The Nibelungen* and then *Metropolis* and all those [other Lang] things."

"Yes, but *Destiny* is different, because the intention is different…. Buñuel admitted that it was what made him want to become a filmmaker. Did you see *Un Chien andalou* here in Spain?"

"Yes, I saw it here."

"What did you think of it?"

"I liked it a lot."

"And *L'Âge d'or*?"

"I saw it a lot later. I saw it in…"

"'34."

"Much later.

…

"You know that Luis, who has always been incredibly strong physically, is the biggest coward in the world, and he admits it. When the insurgency broke out, right at the beginning, they [the workers' militias] arrested Sáenz de la Heredia, who was a close friend of mine. I ran into him in the street. The guy had never had any interest in politics; he'll say now that he had, but it's not true. He was a cousin of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, and that was it. He was charming, funny, just a great guy. I ran into him on one of the first days, in shirt sleeves, and I asked, 'What are you doing here?' He said, 'Just what you see. I'm like a rabbit jumping from one clump of grass to another to hide. I can't stay with any of my relatives, and I'm waiting for them to hunt me down like a rabbit.' … I took him to my house; I went to the Ballesteros Studios and talked to the workers there and the committee [to tell them the man wasn't a fascist]. So we took him to the studio. I took him a bed from my house and food. And all of the workers were great to him, the workers and the committee and all of them, and they even thought he might make a movie, a commercial thing to get involved in film. We even started thinking up a plot and so on.[23] But he went out one time, since he didn't have any money and the workers were giving him their food, he went out to use the phone in a bar across from the studio in order to call one of his uncles, and the line was bugged. They listened in, and the next day they picked him up and took him to one of those *chekas* [secret prisons], in the Calle del Marqués de Riscal. He tells the story of spending three days there, and it's hilarious, a story that would make you die laughing. A total melodrama that would make you die. At that point, I didn't have

any political clout. The only thing I belonged to was the Alianza de Intelectuales. I couldn't go anywhere to stir up a ruckus. They'd arrested this guy the night the first bomb fell on Plaza Cibeles, and I said to myself, 'They're going to liquidate him tonight. Who can I talk to? Who'll have the political authority to say, "Not this one. You can't…?"' It was then that I thought of Buñuel, but Buñuel was on the point of leaving, about to set off on his famous mission abroad to…. He said, 'No, *chico*. I have to go, because I'm leaving, I'm leaving tomorrow.' I told him, 'Look, go the day after. Go the day after, because you've got to do something for this boy, because it doesn't make any sense that he could….' 'No, no, you're right' and so on. And he did it; he talked to somebody on the guy's behalf. This was a Friday, and he left on a Sunday morning; they let him leave."

"What day, what month?"

"I don't know about dates, but it was exactly … if I had a newspaper, I could…. It was the first time Madrid was bombed. A bomb fell on the Ministry of War. Right at the beginning…. I was out eating dinner, and suddenly—boom!—a bomb fell. I thought of José Luis right away, and that's when Buñuel intervened. When they let him go, he came to my house, and he spent two months there in hiding until the Cuban Embassy got him out. He's very grateful to Buñuel, of course, and Buñuel, when he's in town, sees him. Because José Luis was the one who made those [commercial] films for him. He and Marquina were, I think, the ones who made them."

"And Gremillon."

"And Gremillon too. And Eduardo Ugarte. That was the last time I saw Buñuel. he told me, '*Chico*, we've really stepped in it. I thought the revolution had come, but yesterday, I was just walking down the street, and from up on a balcony they shot a guy right there, and I was … 'No, no, not this. Not this.' And he went to Paris, and then came the Munich Agreement, and he went to the United States, and he didn't stop, because he, who was always so so strong…. Did you know that he was the champion arm wrestler of Upper Aragón? Which, by the way, was very funny, because back when we used to get together at the Select, to pretend we were making films and to talk, and so on, Luis arm-wrestled all of us and beat all of us. One day he let Manolo Ángeles beat him. And Manolo Ángeles, who was ingenuous and a little out of it, just couldn't understand how Luis could be the champion of Upper Aragón. And now, he's here [in Madrid]. I don't see him often, because they get together in absurd places and…."

"He doesn't see anybody, because he's deaf."

"Okay, but also three or four new friends have a monopoly on him: [Paco] Rabal, Fernando Rey and those people, and, *chico*, I don't know, but it seems to me that they've kidnapped him. He never tells you anything. I've seen him a number of times, and he always says, 'Hello,' but the one I've really had fun with is Pepín Bello. We took a trip to Andalusia, and Pepín was telling stories about Buñuel and his family, about the father, who was quite a character…."

"What do you know about his father?"

"Ah, his father was a wonderful character. He had so much reverence for masculinity that people say he had a strong box where he kept the sausages and ham—no?—and at dinner time he'd take out the ham and the sausage and he'd serve the men, but not the women. The women didn't have any right to those delicacies, only the boys. And Pepín Bello told hilarious stories. He said the father had a pair of boots with elastic inserts that Buñuel cov-

eted, and the first thing Buñuel did when his father died—this must be a lie—was put on the boots…. It's a shame…. Pepín. You have to look him up, you know?"

"Yes, but he's in Huesca."

"But what's he doing?"

"I'm going to see if I can talk to him."

"Because it's curious. A fellow like Pepín, who never became anything, He was just too smart. He had a huge influence on the others, an enormous influence. He didn't even finish his degree in medicine. I think that if you called him, he would come, he'd tell you something."

…

"Fine. We'll see."

Jeanne Rucar Buñuel

Luis may have been initially attracted to Jeanne because, apart from her beauty, she was, like all the Buñuels, unusually tall for that period. After what must have seemed like an interminable courtship, she forced her reluctant fiancé's hand by becoming pregnant, and Luis agreed, under some pressure from friends and family, to get married. During their long sojourn in Mexico, she became much more "Mexicanized" than her husband, who remained essentially Spanish. She returned to Europe only once, in 1960. Her own take on the relationship was published after Buñuel's death, as Memorias de una mujer sin piano *(Memories of a woman without a piano).*

"All right. Let's see. You met Luis, I've been told, through your sister."

"No."

"That's not true?"

"No."

"So, you were working with Vicens?"

"No."

"So, everything they say about Vicens's bookstore, on the rue Gay-Lussac, is a lie?"

"No, it's not a lie, but things happened differently. I met Luis through Joaquín Peinado, Manolo Angeles Ortiz and Paquito García Lorca. I knew an Andalusian family, and because of them, I met Joaquín. And one day he introduced me to Luis."

"What year was it?"

"1925."

"1925, and Luis…"

"…had just arrived."

"To try to get a position in one of the sections of the Society of Nations."

"Yes, and to get drunk and dance. Well, not actually to dance, because he didn't know how, but to have fun, no?"

"I had no idea that he knew how to dance."

"He didn't. I taught him how to dance the tango. I did it."

"You did? That makes two women who make that claim."

"I was the one. I taught him how to dance the tango."

"Where?"

"At a friend's house. Renée Carée, a friend from gymnastics. Luis went to her house too."

"And, so, you were the friend of a family that was…"

"…Spanish, Andalusian, and that's how I met Joaquín Peinado, First Joaquín and then Manolo and Paquito."[24]

"Why did those young guys want to spend time with older people?"

"Because they knew them from Andalusia."

"That's when you were practicing rhythmic gymnastics. Didn't you win the bronze medal at the 1924 Olympics in Paris?"

"Yes."

"You told me one time that Luis got mad and insisted you give it up, because the gymnasts wore short pants, of course, and you could see their legs."

"Yes, they wore Greek tunics. He's never admitted it, but I know that's why."

"Luis, as prudish as ever. He went out with you a lot then. Where did you go dancing—or was it just at your friend's house?"

"At the house, and sometimes we went to hotels, in the afternoon, because in Paris people dance at the hotels, and we'd go there to dance. We didn't dance very much, because Luis really didn't care for it, but we went a few times."

"Did you become sweethearts right away?"

"No. Well, really, yes … he…."

"He got hold of you."

"He got hold of me. And I can tell you something that he'll deny: when he used to go to Saragossa, he'd tell my mother, Madame Rucar, 'Je vais partir en Espagne. Jeanne ne doit sortir. [I'm going to Spain; Jeanne shouldn't go out.] She can only go out with De la Torre.' What's his name?"

"Claudio."

"With Claudio de la Torre, with friends he relied on. I could go out with them. That's when I gave up gymnastics and went to work at the bookstore. It still didn't belong to Vicens, but to a señor Escribano and somebody else, I don't remember his name. I worked there, selling Spanish books."

"I was never in the bookstore, but I know Gay-Lussac very well. What number of the street was it?"

"It was at the beginning, just after the station."

"Right by the station?"

"Yes."

"Then I did go there, but it belonged to Sánchez Cuesta, at that time. That's where you were? And your sister too?"

"Later on. After Juanito [Vicens] bought it from that señor Escribano. That's when [my sister] Georgette was there, and afterwards, Georgette bought it from Juanito. During the war, they sent all of the Republican papers to the bookstore. And Georgette took all that stuff to our mother's house, which was, of course, very dangerous. If the Germans had found out, they would have shot Mamá."

"I'll have to talk to Luis about that, because one of the things I want to clarify is Luis's role in the war."

"I know nothing about that."

"I know a little. Well, I'm sure you know, but you don't want to tell me anything."

"No. I really don't know anything, because Luis never tells me anything. I know nothing about his…. During the war we lived in Meudon [a suburb of Paris], and he'd come there. He never said a word about the war to me. Nothing. I know absolutely nothing about it."

"I know a few things, and I can figure out some others."

"Of course."

"Not a lot, but some. What I don't know is why he left for the United States in '38. Do you know why?"

"He said it was to make a film. That's what he told me. But he didn't make the film. I don't know."

"And you went with him."

"Yes."

"What was the date?"

"In 1938."

"Yes, but at the beginning or the end?"

"At the end, in October."

"In October of '38. Did you go to New York, or…?"

"To New York and from New York we went to the house, in Stanford, of a Spaniard…. My memory's awful! Well, it will come to me eventually. And after that, we bought a car, and we went to Los Angeles. We lived there. After that, we went back to New York and after that back to Los Angeles and then on to Mexico."

"Yes, I know about all of that. So you don't know anything about it."

"I couldn't have anybody over."

"Luis, like a good Spaniard, or a good Aragonese or a good Arab—I don't know which—hid you from everybody who wasn't Spanish."

"Almost."

"Nobody knew you."

"That's right. In New York, the wife of … well, she was actually the director of the Museum of Modern Art, finally asked him, 'Are you married to a black woman? Is that why you never bring her out?' Back then, it was really because we didn't have money, and we had the kids; we just couldn't. I had to stay at home with the boys."[25]

"Okay. Let's see: what year did you get married?"

"In 1934, '33 or '34."

"'34, which—if my calculations don't lie—means an eight-year courtship."

…

"So you got married in '34. The odd thing is, when Sadoul talks about Luis, he says that he didn't even know Luis had gotten married."

"Yes."

"When did he introduce you to Sadoul?"

"I think it was here in Mexico."

"No. The fact is he never introduced you, because Sadoul himself says that when he showed up here in Mexico, Luis was off somewhere, and he stayed in this house, next to the firearms."

"That's it. He stayed with Rafael [the younger son], next to the firearms Luis keeps

upstairs. That's right. I hadn't even met him then. The only surrealist that I knew was Aragon. I went to eat at his house and so on."

"Were they living on the rue de la Sourdière by then?"

"I don't now. It was a little apartment. Elsa made necklaces to earn a living. I remember that part very clearly. They didn't have any money. I didn't meet the others. I knew his Spanish friends, at least Joaquín and Hernando Viñes and Manolo Ángeles and Federico and the cripple."

"[Pancho] Cossío."

"Cossío, Uzelay, Claudio de la Torre."

"How about Dalí?"

"Of course! All those friends who…."

"Did you meet Dalí in Paris?"

"In 1925 or '26, right away."

"What did you think about him then?"

"I loved him, because he was such good company. When we'd leave a café, he'd say, 'Juanita, Juanita, how much money should I leave?' He didn't know what a franc was worth. He didn't know anything at all about Paris, but he made me laugh. I met another painter too, Moreno Villa."

"You saw a lot of Moreno Villa. Where did you meet him?"

"In Paris too. He looked very young with his little moustache. When we'd go to a restaurant, he'd say, 'Mademoiselle,' and to ask the waitress for something, he'd twist his moustache. Later on, when I was pregnant, when I was waiting for Juan Luis to be born, I went to Madrid and visited the Residencia de Estudiantes, and I saw him there again."

"What year was that?"

"1934, because the baby was born right away. I went to the Residencia, and I met Federico too."

"You hadn't met him before?"

"No, not Federico, because he hadn't come to Paris."

"Was that when Luis presented *L'Âge d'or* in Madrid?"

"Yes, No, no it wasn't."

"I think it was."

"I'm not sure. I don't remember."

"Let's step back a little. He gets to Paris. He starts living off the money his mother gives him. Where did he live?"

"In the Hotel Le Gladier. He lived in a different one before that, on a street that opens onto the Boulevard Saint-Michel, but I don't remember the name."

"When did he start working for Epstein?"

"A year later."

"Who introduced him to Epstein?"

"I don't know."

"And he worked for Epstein for two years, didn't he?"

"Until he broke off with him."

"And he made *Un Chien andalou* right away."

"But did he do it with Dalí in Paris?"

"In Paris and In Cadaqués."

"Did they write it in Spanish or in French."

"In Spanish."

"Or in Catalonian?"

"No, no. Luis doesn't understand Catalonian as far as I know."

"Okay. They wrote it in Spanish, but the text has always been published in French, and when it was published in Spanish, I assume it was translated, or re-translated. And how about Larrea? Where did you meet him?"

"I met Larrea here in Mexico."

"So you hadn't met him in Paris?"

"No, never."

"When you were sweethearts, did you see Luis every day?"

"No, just once a week."

"Once a week for eight years?"

"Well, maybe twice, depending on whether we went to the movies or not. There were times when he was very enthusiastic about film, and we'd go almost three times a day: in the morning to a private showing, in the afternoon and then later on in the evening. We've seen all the films that…."

"Did the two of you go on your own to the film theater?"

"Yes, of course."

"That made you very different from his Spanish girlfriends. In Spain, somebody had to go with them."

"Yes, they'd go with the *mademoiselle* bringing up the rear."

"Exactly."

"And when it was a sad film, he'd touch me under the eye to see if I were crying."

"Really?"

"Back then. Now I don't cry at all. I made a big effort not to cry, and now I can't cry at all."

"He decided to become a filmmaker—he's told the story lots of times—when he saw one of Fritz Lang's films. Had he talked about that idea before then with Dalí?"

"I don't know. Luis does what he wants to, and he never tells me anything. He never gives me a script to read. He does it all on his own. He never talks to me about his work. Never. And I don't ask either, because I know he won't tell me."

"Why do you think he's like that? Because he truly doesn't want to, or because…?"

"Or because he thinks I'm a fool."

"Well, that's an understandable reaction from the wife's point of view, but surely what's going on is that he keeps things to himself, because he wants to think them over, to let them mature before he does something. Doesn't he ever consult you?"

"Never."

"He's never read a sequence to you?"

"Never, never. Sometimes he's writing and thinking to himself, and he laughs. I'll say, 'What are you laughing about?' He'll say, 'Oh, I'm thinking up something for the film.' But he won't tell me what. So I don't ask him anymore. He was like that when I met him; he's always been like that so I just don't ask him anything. Maybe it's my fault too."

"What did people say in France, in Paris, about such a long courtship, a Spanish style courtship?"

"Nothing really. Since I didn't see anybody in those days, I really didn't care what people said. My father always had great confidence in Luis; he loved him."

"Now tell me what you were talking about a while ago, about the Spanish class that your friends gave your mother. What did she say when she greeted Luis?"

"'Damn you, Damn you,' and she thought she was saying 'Good afternoon, sir.' Those were Peinado's jokes or Manolo's or Paquito's. The three of them were like that, and they taught her even worse things. They used to come by the house a lot before Luis came."

"Where were you living?"

"On Gambetta Avenue, and that Andalusian family lived across from us. And there was a young woman Georgette's age. They met each other, because she took in sewing."

"Georgette was older or younger?"

"Older. She died ten years ago. She was sixty-eight. She'd be eighty now. So we got to know three Spanish boys and then Luis. When he met me, he came over right away and brought me an Easter egg—it was Easter—a chocolate egg, and Mamá had enough chocolate for two years, because that was the biggest egg I've ever seen. And flowers and roses. I was seventeen. I was just a girl."

"And you went on from then. Was there ever an interruption in your relationship?"

"No. I don't think so. I'm not sure. Because at first Luis was Conchita Méndez's boyfriend, and, well, there was no break on my part. As to Luis, I don't know. Luis went to the United States, and I waited for him. We've always been good friends, always. There were never any fights. It's been a strange relationship."

"Not so strange. When you got involved with Luis, did you know about his surrealist interests?"

"No. Not at all. I didn't know what surrealism was. My life was devoted to the piano and gymnastics. I didn't think about other things then."

"Tell me about the piano."

"Well, since then, he's never let me play. He must have seen my piano teacher. One day when he was at the house and somebody came to visit, Mamá said, 'Jeanne, play your waltz, the Chopin waltz.' I started to play, and Luis come over and said, 'If that's the best you can do, it's better to drop it,' and—boom!—he slammed the top down on the piano. I've never played again. Luis will say it's a lie."

"They say that he accompanied you on the violin, which makes a much prettier story."

"It's true. At first, he came with his violin, and we played a piece by Handel. He accompanied me on the violin. It's true."

"Has he never gone back to the violin?"

"No. Never."

"When did he give it up?"

"After his first year in Paris."

"After becoming a surrealist."

"Yes. Afterwards we gave the violin away."

"And he never talked to you about surrealism when you were sweethearts?"

"No. Never. I was his pet, the little girl he kept apart from the rest of his life, hidden away. He never talked to me—not even now—about politics. He never talks to me about anything. We talk about the house, about the children, and that's it. He's the model Spanish husband who keeps his wife in the background. That's the way things are."

"Well, that explains a lot of things about Buñuel."

"Yes, about Luis and also about me. I'm very calm. I don't get mad. Juan Luis is just like me that way."

"I'd like you to hear some of the declarations Luis has made lately. He used to be very close-mouthed, and now, suddenly, he's talking, but I get the impression that he's telling a lot of lies."

"Probably."

"Does he have an archive?"

"No."

"He doesn't have an archive? But Sadoul says that you and your son brought down a lot of clippings for him to see."

"Oh, yes. He keeps clippings. Yes."

"He keeps them stored away?"

"Yes. He keeps them locked up."

"In Madrid, when you were first there, he worked on and supervised, as he says, a number of films, but is it true that he actually made them himself?"

"Yes, he did. He directed them, under a different name."

"Under a different name? Whose name?"

"The assistant's, no?"

"That's interesting although I'm trying not to get into his films any more than I have to. By the way, Luis said recently, when he was finishing his film, that it was the last one he'd make."

"It's true. He always says it. But a month goes by, and he finds himself in his room with books on I don't know what, thinking and taking notes on bits of paper, and he gets an idea. He has to have something to do."

"He's made more or less all the films he's wanted to make."

"Yes."

"Except for one that I suppose he'll make: *El monje*, right?"

"Yes."

"So he still has to make *El monje* based on Lewis's book."[26]

"Yes, but now he's saying he won't. Well, we'll see. When he gets back [from Europe], he'll be tired. And after a month, after Christmas, you'll see: he'll start looking around for something to do."

* * *

I speak to Jeanne on the telephone about Jomí García Ascot's article, which she has not seen.

"He speaks about you at length and very highly."[27]

"I'm surprised. They always talk about Concha, about Luis, about his family, his lovers, not about me."

"Luis doesn't have any lovers."

She hesitates: "No, of course not."

I don't ask. Later she goes back to the subject. He must have lovers, but how would you find out. Luis lies; he has always lied. He turns lying into one of the great arts. But he lies in order to exaggerate his sadism, his masochism, his cruelty. He lies to keep from

exposing himself, to keep others from finding out about him. It's the only way he can free himself, by hiding. Only when he's hidden, protected by his lies, does he really feel free.

Twenty days ago, I asked Jeanne: "What's Luis up to?"

"He's in Madrid."

"For how long?"

"Until he runs out of pesetas."

"How long do you think?"

"Until mid–January."

* * *

The Burgos Trial led to popular demonstrations and protests, following by the suspension of civil liberties throughout Spain. I call Jeanne to ask about Luis.[28]

"He's in Paris."

The night before I called her, I had assured Alcoriza that Luis would get out. Alcoriza had agreed with me. Who knows? Buñuel's reaction may have been wise.

Jeanne always says that she knows nothing, that's she's not up on anything, that she doesn't even know what surrealism is about, and yet she was Luis's assistant on *L'Âge d'or*! She told me yesterday that she knows the film by heart.

"When an actor was going to say his part, I already knew what he was going to say."

Of course, that was forty years ago. How can people say *today* that Buñuel hid her, that she was a nobody, *back then*? She says Luis had nothing to do with actresses (there could have been no doubt, then, that in the looks department there was no comparison between Jeanne and Lya Lys).

It's strange how a person becomes what other people say she is. There's no doubt that, from 1935 on, she focused on her sons. Juan Luis was born and then, during the Second World War, Rafael.[29] Buñuel's war-time activities were not the kind he could share (there are no photos from the Civil War period). In the United States his bureaucratic work in film wasn't something he'd show off, nor was the dubbing work in Hollywood. In Mexico, at first, they had a hard time even getting enough to eat. Then, little by little, their lives became more comfortable, and Jeanne became a little more independent. In his marriage, Buñuel is not so much the ogre, not so much the jealous Spaniard, as people like to picture him. Not by a long shot. The truth is both he and Jeanne are leading the lives they want to.

Manuel Ángeles Ortíz

Paris, 7 and 13 June 1969

Five years older than Buñuel and established in Paris since 1922 (although he had spent time there earlier), Ortiz was from Granada and close to Federico and Paco García Lorca, Manuel de Falla and other Andalusian artists. In Madrid, he formed part of La Barraca *with Federico and got to know Buñuel. He was one of the group of Spanish painters who took up Luis when he was finding his way in Paris. He performed in* L'Âge d'or *as the gamekeeper who shoots his son "just because."*

"Manolo, do you still believe, like I do, that all of Buñuel is in *L'Âge d'or*?"

"I think so. It's one of his best films."

"His best? Or one of his best?"

"For me, it's the best."

"There you have it."

"Everything. Every single thing he says after that is masterly, but it all comes from *L'Âge d'or.* There's a kind of poetic subversion in it; in the others, he's tried to do something political, without really doing it or really meaning it."

"In *L'Âge d'or* he only wanted to show one thing: *l'amour fou* [crazy love]."

"It was subversion for the sake of subversion, but poetic, a poetic dream, a dream about the holocaust caused by love."

"It's a dream. And something makes me think it's also a love story, in the same way *Un Chien andalou* is a love story."

"I don't know. There's love in everything, isn't there? But … what kind of love? Erotic or…?"

"The same as in *L'Âge d'or.*"

"I think eroticism in Buñuel, in that film and in *Un Chien andalou*, is the eroticism of a man who's a prude at heart."

…

"Let's get back to Buñuel. You took up with him again when he came to Paris and devoted his time to living the life of a rich kid."

"In that period, Luis and Vicens were both rich kids, and they kept falling in love. They came here to have fun. That's when Juan Vicens decided to do something with the money he had. Jeanne Rucar's father was an accountant, and—if I remember correctly—he had a factory that manufactured things made out of rubber. We teased Vicens, saying they were condoms. I don't remember if it was true, but anyway we said that he was going to invest his fortune in a condom factory. I don't know if that was the reason or not, but the fact is that he bought a bookstore: La Libreria Española on the rue Gay-Lussac. No. Sánchez Ventura had already set it up, and he bought that bookstore and set himself up in it."[30]

"And that's where Jeanne's sister worked."

"Jeanne's sister was Juan Vicens's secretary, and she became the owner of the store at the end."

"Besides all that, it was the place during the war where they received the things from…."

"I don't really know about all that. During the war, I was in Spain."

"But Luis…."

"Luis wasn't. You can't talk to Luis about war, about violence and war, no."

"Okay. Now here's an interesting point: yesterday I was talking to Pepe Bergamín, and he remembers how he left Spain with Imaz and Buñuel, but Roces tells me that Buñuel was already in Paris."

"When war broke out, he was in Madrid, and I was with him all the time. I remember how upset he was. I don't know if it was then, or a little before, that he invited the Viñes, Loulou and Hernando—when they took that famous photograph—he invited them to a banquet that we gave in honor of Hernando. Everybody was there: Pablo Neruda, whom I'd met in Chile. That was at the beginning of '36, and I remember that he was very nervous. The war started after that."

"When did he leave?"

"I don't know, but he didn't waste any time."

…

"He always hid Luisa from everybody, even from us."

"Who did he hide?" Aub responds, surprised.

"Luisa."

"You mean Juana."

"Juana, that's who I mean."

"It's his character."

"He's the same. He goes off and leaves Juana. He goes everywhere and never takes her with him. I don't know. I don't know if Juana just doesn't want to go or if Buñuel doesn't let her go with him. Buñuel is very, very peculiar."

"But was he the same back in the Paris years?"

"Oh, yes. Buñuel never took Juana anywhere. She's never been with him anywhere. Not even when she was his great love … if there was a great love."

"I don't know. She hasn't changed. She still looks wonderful."

"Here's how I see it: I don't know if Buñuel hid her away, or if she just didn't want to go out with his group. Because there's another issue: I'm thinking now, since we've started talking about it, that at the time Buñuel was getting interested in surrealism, Juana couldn't relate to any of that. What role could she play in a movement of surrealists, in an intellectual atmosphere that was so strange, so bizarre? Juana likes being the mother of their children, the wife of Buñuel. She likes spending time with friends."

Joaquín Peinado

Mexico, August 1971

Peinado, who was from Ronda (Andalusia), was another of the Spanish artists living in Paris who became friends with Buñuel when the director first arrived in Paris. Peinado played a guest at the concert in L'Âge d'or.

"When did you meet Buñuel?"

"I think we met each other in 1924 or '25.[31] In '24, I think, because I got to Paris at the end of '23, and right away I fell in with the group you already know: Manolo Ángles Ortiz, [Pancho] Cossío, Bores and Buñuel, Buigas, Paco García Lorca. At that time—it must have been 1924—they had just opened a hotel called the Hotel des Terraces, on the rue de la Glacière, number seventy-four. All these Spaniards were the first occupants or inhabitants of that hotel; we 'premiered' it. Ismael Gónzalez de la Serna and Milicua and Uzelay were part of the group too.[32] Some of us lived on a street that was called the rue Broca then. Anyway, we all used to eat dinner in a restaurant on the Boulevard Arago that belonged to a gentleman named Bondoux, and as many as fifteen Spaniards would get together there. Juan Vicens was one of the ones we brought along, because he had his bookstore then, the Librería Sánchez Cuesta—you remember it?—on the Rue Gay-Lussac. Well, we formed a group there, and we got together every night. Buñuel had a room in the Hotel des Terraces. Buñuel was—I was about to say he was the rich kid, but there were others like Buigas and Paco García Lorca who also came from money. Vicens wasn't quite so flush by the time he

got to us. He'd sold the family mill and invested in the bookstore, but somebody as upright as he was could never exactly flourish as a businessman, no? Anyway, to sum things up, it was an interesting, likeable group of people, and we've kept on being friends. We've always remained good friends. So, Buñuel had one of the best rooms, on an upper floor of the hotel, which had five or six floors. His room had a terrace where he installed a *punching ball* [in English], a ball about this big with straps, and every morning, nude to the waist, he had a boxing session. That really impressed us, especially the ones who didn't know him so well or the ones who weren't so physically inclined. But he had come from the Residencia de Estudiantes, like Juanito Vicens. He had ideas about health, and he liked to practice sports to keep in good shape. We got together in the Coupole almost every night, and we were joined there by other Spaniards who had more modest means, because Uzelay, Paco García Lorca, Buñuel, Vicens [and I] came from families with money; we got our stipends every month. Things were different at La Rotonde: many of the boys who gathered there lived off their own work. They were excellent sculptors, artists, they made picture frames, furniture; they were talented. I remember—if you're interested…."

"Yes, tell me about all of it."

"I could go on and on. One night we were at La Rotonde. We took out our pens. Was the Parker the best, or was the other one better, the Waterman? I don't now how the argument ended. What I do know is that suddenly a jet of ink spurted out and fell on Buñuel, on a handsome new overcoat that he'd just brought back from Madrid and that we all admired. We thought Buñuel would get mad or take off or…. No. He just said, 'I'll send it to the cleaner's tomorrow. The ink will disappear.' He wasn't upset at all. That impressed me, and the proof is that I'm telling you now. There were other things about Buñuel too, some of them odd, some we accepted. I don't know if Buñuel was timid as a young man. I don't think he ever was, but I don't know your ideas on the subject. I've had an important role in Buñuel's life. Sometimes I even say that he became a filmmaker because of me. That's a big claim. And I'll also say that he married Juanita because of me."

"Is it true that you were Juanita's boyfriend before Luis?"

"Absolutely not.

"I got to Paris, as I told you, in late 1923, in November … and I had a letter of presentation for a family from Córdoba. The single woman was named Conchita Urbano, and we called the married one Rafaela, because it was her husband Seyler's first name. She and Conchita were sisters. There were two of them, and they gave me a warm reception. They told me, 'Joaquín, we're going to have a party here such and such a day. If you have any Spanish friends, bring them.' So I took Paco García Lorca, Manolo Ángeles Ortiz and Luis Buñuel. They met Hernando [Viñes] too. One day, for Juanita's First Communion—she was very young—I took all of them to her house, and, well, Juanita's family adopted us. The group of Spaniards was really sought after."

"Was that on the Boulevard Gambetta or something like that? What I'd like to clarify is whether Juanita's father had a business with rubber goods or if he was an accountant?"

"As I understand it, he had a business with rubber goods that our dear Juan Vicens wanted to represent or to expand, I don't know which. I think it was tires. I don't know any more about it. He stayed out of things. We hardly saw him, because he felt out of his depth with that avalanche of brilliant Spaniards who were hitting Paris. He was a timid man; he kept himself hidden away. We hardly saw him. On the other hand, the girls were good com-

pany. Juanita and Georgette: they were sisters; Georgette was older, and Juanita was very young. Anyway, in 1924, I think, I rented a studio on the Boulevard Montparnasse, and the girls showed up there, not just Juanita, but also Helène Tasnon and another whose name I can't remember, Catherine or something like that. Anyway, they came to the studio, and I summoned my friends: 'Juanita is coming!' And we got together there…. Time went by. We kept on getting together. We would go on vacations that separated us, because each one would go to his hometown, but then we'd get back together again. One year, 1925, when I got back from my holidays, I told me friends, 'In Ronda I met a *troupe de cinéma*, a society called Albatros made up of Russians, and I spent some time with them because they asked me. 'You're our man. You're a painter, and you're from Ronda; you can help us out here.' The director of the film was named Jacques Feyder, and he was making *Carmen*, one of the versions, because they've made others since then. He was there with Raquel Meller and with Louis Larch, a German. And when I was leaving, they told me, 'You can help us with the sets.' Lazar Merson, who was very well known as a set decorator, did them. They were good. The studio was at Montreuil. I went to their studio every day, and at night, I'd go to La Rotonde. Well, first for supper at Bondoux's and then to La Rotonde for a coffee. Some nights when I got there, I'd say, 'Gentlemen, who wants to go to Montreuil tomorrow to be an extra?' Of course, they all raised their hands. Rafael Sánchez Ventura, Cossío, Buñuel, Hernando Viñes…. And then Buñuel, who already had had some contact with Epstein and with other directors of that period, whose names escape me now, said, 'Okay. I want to see how Feyder works, to see his technique.' So he came. And not just that. They also gave him a few little roles in *Carmen.* He appeared one time as an Aragonese with some saddlebags, and he was very funny. And he said, 'I touched up, well, not exactly Raquel Meller, but one of the other actresses.' The first part of the film isn't very good, and it's all too long, but the last part…. Feyder also directed another film—I can't remember the name—about the Spanish in Flanders."

"I remember it, because Louis Page, the cameraman in the film you're talking about, was also the cameraman who shot *L'Espoir/Sierra de Teruel* [*Days of Hope*] with Malraux and me later on in Spain…."

"It's *La Kermesse héroique* [*Carnival in Flanders*]. Well, Buñuel was interested in film, and he knew Feyder's work, of course; he knew *La Kermesse héroique,* which came out before *Carmen*…. We went to the premier of *Carmen,* I think at the Marivaux, and we were arguing over whether to wear a smoking jacket or an evening suit or what, because you were expected to look elegant. That was with Buñuel and with all our friends from that time. Once we had a little rehearsal in the middle of the Boulevard Edgard Quinet, a rehearsal of how to carry the cape, because they wanted to shoot a little farce about bullfighting in the studio. I remember Sánchez Ventura took Cossío's overcoat, saying, "This is the way to do a long pass," and he threw the coat on the ground and then dragged it all along the boulevard. And there was poor Cossío saying, '*Hombre*, you're getting it all dirty. You're cleaning the boulevard with my overcoat," because he was dragging it very slowly. Well, that's what our film days were like, our first encounter with film, in 1925 or the beginning of '26…."

"Here's something I want to ask you: Juanita, back then, won a medal in the Olympic Games in gymnastics, a medal she still has."

"Yes, in fact she showed it to me Monday when I was eating dinner with them. I didn't

pay much attention to the medal. Juanita and Helène Tasnon, a friend of hers who was charming, were both part of a school or academy of physical culture run by…. Irène Popart. Does that name ring a bell? She had a lot of students, all girls, and she made them wear very pretty tunics. Of course, now they do much riskier things. Anyway, Juanita was part of Irène Popart's team, and that's where the medal came from. I had it in my hand the other day, but I didn't remember anything about it."

[They talk a bit about when Luis got married and when and how long he lived in Meudon, outside Paris.]

"He also lived on the rue Pascal" [says Peinado]. "The other day I asked him, 'Do you remember when you lived on the Rue Pascal?' 'Yes, yes, I remember.' I was there one time, with Viñes, and Luis fixed supper for us. He made us some lamb chops; he cooked them himself with a little olive oil on the grill, and we all ate them up. And then he said, 'I obviously didn't make enough food, because you haven't left a bite; you've eaten every bit of it.' That's typical of Luis. He accused us of being piggy. The truth is that he'd done a good job. Everything was cooked perfectly, but you know what he's like, always on the attack.

"We often ate at Hernando Viñes's house—Hernando, the nephew of Ricardo Viñes, the pianist—well, you know all that. Hernando was always close to musicians and interesting people. I met Sauget there, of course, and Ricardo and Darius Milhaud.[33] I met all those people thanks to Viñes. One day Hernando told us, 'We have to work because [Willem Mengelberg] has asked Papá to do the sets for *El retablo de maese Pedr*o. He's putting it on in Holland. He had already done it in 1923; we made the sets then. They want to put it on at the Amsterdam Opera, and they've asked Papá and the rest of us to do the sets.' Fine. On the rue Broca, there was a big studio occupied by Cossío, Uzelay and a few others, and that's where we constructed the sets. Hernando's father, don José Viñes was a nervous man, and he got mad when they started hitting things with a hammer in order to build the little stage for the puppet show. Cossío kept telling him, 'Don José, it's not a piano.' Anyway, at night, in Hernando's house, we rehearsed the musical part, the movements of the children and the puppets and everything. I had the part of Maestro Pedro. Rafael Sauras, another of our friends—I didn't mention him before; he was from Saragossa, like Buñuel [they were cousins]—played don Quixote, because he was very thin. We rehearsed all that at Viñes's house. One of Ricardo's students, a girl, played the piano, and we all did our part. I remember very clearly that Buñuel took charge as the artistic director. He did it like a cineaste, like a movie director, and I was impressed, because he could read the score. And I said to myself, 'This Buñuel is amazing. He doesn't just know about literature and film, he knows about music, and he can actually read it!' So he directed the thing. For some reason, he didn't go to Amsterdam; he stayed in Paris…. Ah, no, no, no! He did go with us…. He talked about Holland, because it was his first trip to Holland, and afterwards we went on to Belgium. We visited the museums, various cities. Of course, he went with us."

"How about Juanita? Did she go?"

"No, no, no."

"What did he say about the Dutch painters and about Holland?"

"Look, I've never thought he was much of a fan of painting…. He didn't have that sort of sensibility or that attraction. He came to our studios, but he never showed much interest in painting. What he liked best about the trip were the cities, the effort they made in the Lowlands to defend themselves from the sea and, then, their highways, which were lighted

up at night so the traffic moved just as it did by day. For people like us who came from Spain in 1923 or '24 where all that kind of thing was totally neglected, it was really impressive. And, of course, he admired the museums and the paintings, but I never felt he loved painting. Later on, I realized that he has a great sense of form in his films, right? I don't know. What do you think?"

"I think Luis is more interested in what's functional for his films. That functionality can lead to a beauty that, basically, has nothing to do with the kind of representation we see in painting."

"I agree. But in that film—what's it called?—where there's a supper with beggars, in *Viridiana,* all the critics say he put in the *Supper,* the *Last Supper* by…."

"I know about that. It wasn't based on Leonardo's *Last Supper* at all, which is in awful shape now. No, he was working from a postcard—the kind the Jesuits put out—where Leonardo's *Last Supper* is nicely touched up, so it's a little hoaky."

"Okay, but later on, in one of his last films, *La Voie Lactée,* when Jesus comes in with his apostles, the young man whose mother tells him, 'Don't shave your beard' and so on. I think that he's created very beautiful images."

"Well, time teaches us a lot, my dear Peinado."

"True. In those days, it was literature that interested him. One day he gave us an exam. A few of us were at Viñés's house, and with us—you may not know him—was another painter: Gregorio Prieto, a youngster, well, like all of us back then. Luis was always saying, 'You painters are illiterate; you don't know a thing about literature.' It was true. We were—at least I was—illiterate. So he says to Prieto, 'What books have you read?' I don't know what Prieto said. Then he says to me, 'How about you? What have you read?' I had just read it, so I said, '*The Village of Stepanchikovo* [Dostoyevsky].' 'Ah, you win the prize. You're the smartest, the most erudite of all.' So he gave me a sort of diploma, for being the only painter who wasn't illiterate. Of course, it wasn't fair at all, because there were painters in the group, Hernando himself, for example, who had a French education and an interesting circle of friends thanks to his uncle and other things. But Buñuel always thought of us as illiterates, and he looked down on us at the same time that he loved us, no?

"Then there was his background; he had money, and his friends would sometimes ask him for a hand-out—the ones who weren't getting money from home. And sometimes he treated them like professional spongers, with a lack of sensitivity that he has come to regret since then. He'd say something like 'I have so many thousand francs here, but I'm not going to give you the ten francs you want.' From time to time he did things like that that were a little harsh and that surprised us all. What I'm wondering is: was that an example of timidity? I don't know. He's always had very fixed ideas about things. He was energetic and very smart. If he was going, say, to eat dinner with Epstein or somebody else, he would keep seven-hundred francs back. Then a Fenosa[34] or a Cossío would ask him for ten francs, and he'd say, 'No, I have seven-hundred francs for tomorrow. I'm going to eat with Epstein. I'm inviting him, and we're going to eat at such-and-such restaurant.' That kind of thing used to leave us a little disconcerted, but what could we do? Here's another example: one day he said, 'Oh, I'm very worried, very indignant.' 'But what's the matter, Luis?' 'The family has bought a Renault, and I didn't want them to buy a Renault.' I'd say, 'You really have a lot to worry about!' The things that bothered me were, first of all, having to live off my father's money, and, second, hearing that things weren't going well with his business. But Luis's

case was different: he had a different ethic, a different way of thinking, because he didn't know anything about that kind of problem…. Still, we had great fun; we got together all the time. When he made *Un Chien andalou,* that was…. What's that lady's name?"

"Noailles."

"Yes, the house was on the Place des États Unis. So, one day that lady, the princess or whatever she was, told Buñuel he could invite his friends to a presentation of the film. Off we went. There was a pretty little projection room in that palace. It was filled with people, and that's where the film was shown. It wasn't just Buñuel's Spanish friends, but his French friends too and everybody else. I remember seeing Louis Aragon there and lots of other people, especially from the surrealist group…. Since this kind of gathering is usually put on with great generosity of the part of the owners, there was a bar. Some of the young surrealists got into it and started emptying bottles. They put water in the gin bottle, wine in the whiskey bottle, and whiskey in another bottle. I didn't really approve of that kind of surrealist gesture, and I felt a little taken aback by it all. We had armchairs with cigarettes by each one, some with a blue velvet filter and others with a purple one. It was…. But that's where we saw *Un Chien andalou,* because they'd invited all Buñuel's friends."

"You didn't see *Un Chien,* but *L'Âge d'or.* I have some pretty precise information about that day. It's really interesting. Now, here's something I've been wanting to ask you: at the point when Dalí reached Paris, and he and Buñuel got together, what happened? I mean, did you lose sight of Buñuel when he started meeting with Pierre Unik and Sadoul and Aragon and getting more or less involved with the Communist group?"

"Yes. From the time you're talking about we did, in fact, begin to see less of each other. I'm not sure. Part of it was that we were all getting older, and each one had his own concerns, and those concerns became more pressing, and we didn't see as much of Luis, or, at least, I didn't, because of his close relationship with the surrealist group and with the Party. I never became part of those things. I just wasn't interested in surrealism. I loved painting in the pictorial sense, and I didn't want to make literature a part of it. I just don't know. Maybe there was a certain separation, but I can't tell you exactly what it was. And it wasn't for the reasons I just gave you, because I was still a close friend of Louis Aragon's, close to Breton himself and to Tristan Tzara. When the Spanish War started in '36, they collaborated with us in the Tourist Office which became the Propaganda Office [on the Boulevard de la Madeleine]. Buñuel was there too. But that didn't happen until '36."

"I'd like you to give me your point of view so I can compare it with others."

"Fine."

"Buñuel showed *Un Chien andalou* at the Studio des Ursulines in March of '29. The film was a great success, and the surrealists wanted to throw out Luis, because of the film's success.[35] So he sets up an agreement with the Noailles, and that's when he shoots *L'Âge d'or,* and everybody goes to the house that belonged to the Viscount and Viscountess, no? That's when the story you just told me took place. But what interests me now: Tell me if you think Luis was a member of the Communist Party, either the French one or the Spanish one, and then tell me about your relationship with Luis during the war and in relation to the stuff on the Boulevard de la Madeleine and all that. And about Juanito Vicens' part in that, and Eduardo Ugarte's, etc. etc."

"Well, in fact, I didn't have such close contact with Luis then, because before the war he went to Spain, no? I saw him in his house."

"He did; he was making films there."

"Making films? In Spain? I saw him once in Madrid. He was involved in film, but I think he was dubbing films. And that's around the time you mentioned before, when he was suffering from sciatica. He got up from the bed (I was in his bedroom), and he went down to a black door at the end of the room, and he said to me, 'Joaquín, look what this sciatica has done to my torso.' And he stood there, in front of the black door as if it were a mirror, and he was right: his spine was twisted. It was very obvious. Maybe having to spend so much time in bed because of that illness is what separated us a little too."

"On the other hand, coinciding with the beginning of the Spanish War (I had been in Spain), I began to take some little courses and so on. When I got back to Paris in '36, don Enrique Ramos, a minister who was a close friend of my bother Juan, presented me with a mission. He told me, 'Joaquín, I want you to take care of the Tourist Office we have there; it's a nest of fascists.' So I headed up there, and when I got there, the war had broken out, and by force of circumstances…. I found that I was the director or sub-director—because there wasn't one—of that office, and I asked myself, 'What on earth will we do with this beautiful Tourist Office that's right on the Boulevard de la Madeleine?' So I talked to José Luis Sert[36] and with Guillermo de Torre, and the three of us came up with a report, which we carried to the ambassador—I think it was Araquistáin—and we said, 'Señor Ambassador, we want to transform this into an office for propaganda. We have documents. Chim, Capa and another photographer have all gone to Spain and they've brought back photographs from the front, and we want to take advantage of them.'[37] They agreed, and so that office was transformed. We posted publications from the front, and people crowded in to see them. We posted the news releases from the front…. We had a display window: fourteen meters of window space on the rue Vigon and the Boulevard de la Madeleine. Every day we covered it with industrial sized photographs, all huge. We put up one of Federico and, next to it, his poem 'La casada infiel' ['The Unfaithful Wife'], translated by…. I don't remember who. Suddenly, I got a phone call from Belgium, 'Joaquín, Joaquín.' 'Who's speaking?' 'Paco [García Lorca]. I've found out … that you have a big portrait up in that office and you've got to take it down. You've got to take it down, because we still have hopes that Federico isn't dead,' and so on. Everybody knew he was dead. I talked to Juan Vicens and other friends about it, and they said, 'That Paco, he's driving us crazy, but, unfortunately, it's not true; they killed Federico. Everybody knows it, and he doesn't want anybody to do anything.'

"Well, every day Aragon, Tristan Tzara, César Vallejo came to the office to work with us.[38] Lots of people came, but not Buñuel. I didn't see Buñuel. I don't know why. I don't think Buñuel was a member of the Communist Party. I was working with them. I never joined; but we were close. On the other hand, I remember wondering, 'What's Buñuel's position?' One day, he and Eduardo Ugarte came by the office; they were leaving that afternoon for Barcelona, traveling by car. What I do remember, because I figured they were probably on a mission, something that shouldn't be spread about, what I do remember is their friends giving them advice: 'What a trip! And by car! The one who's driving is deaf and the other is blind. How are you going to get there?' Because Luis was starting to go deaf, and Ugarte could hardly see. So, I thought, 'These friends are involved too, and they may have a much more important function than anything I'm doing here.' You know the rest of it, because that's about when you arrived—remember?—during the Arts et Tech-

niques exhibition and the Spanish Pavillion.[39] Because José Luis Sert was there and Guillermo de Torre. That was at the beginning, in the first months. Later on, it was Lacasa, Vicens. The other one who was there a lot, who replaced Vicens, was Ugarte…."

"Replaced him doing what?"

"In the direction of the Tourist Office. Sánchez Arcas, who worked in the propaganda service, put him in as head. Of course, that office expanded when I got there, and we asked for help from the embassy. We started with very modest means and the help of those friends I mentioned to you. We would get together, especially with Tzara. Tzara would join the people who crowded around to read the update from the front. That happened every afternoon. Unfortunately, it wasn't exactly a party, but a lot of people gathered there, and pedestrian movement always slowed down on our part of the sidewalk. About two years ago, in 1970 or so, Luis invited me and my oldest daughter Nina, not to eat supper, but to eat dinner, because he says that he goes to bed early. He took us to a restaurant near the Place de Saint Michel, I don't remember exactly where, and when we were there at the table, he said to his sister Conchita, 'Look, if I married Juanita, this is the guy who was responsible, because he came to Paris, and he met Rafaela—isn't that her name?' It was Rafaela. We met Juanita and Georgette and all their family through her. There's always been….

"I've heard Juanita say, when Buñuel was in Hollywood or maybe Mexico, and he was prostrate, doing nothing, she says that she'd tell him, 'Luis, you can't keep on like this; you've got to do something.' She says she'd push him, and he'd start to work on something. I don't know to what extent she's been a good influence on him. You'd know more about all that. When I came to Mexico in 1954, we hadn't seen each other in a long time. I came to put on an exhibition at the Inés Amor gallery. Juanita called me and said, 'Look, Luis asks every day: "Have you called Joaquín? Do you have any news of Joaquín? Joaquín has to come."' And she insisted, because she knows Luis has a reputation for being very peculiar and not wanting to see people. She didn't want me to be intimidated, so she insisted that he was the one who was asking for me, that he was the one who wanted to see me. Anyway, I knew he wouldn't come to the opening reception for the show, because he never goes to exhibitions, but when it was about to close, there he was. And we had a great time with him at his house, but he had to go to Paris to work, and he'd be there for about three months. I went to see Juanita a lot. Rafael was there (Juan Luis was in North America), and we'd get together and go out. Once Rafael and I went horseback riding at a place owned by a guy from Seville."

[He talks about Luis's great love and respect for José Moreno Villa and also, a little later, about the mural of flowers Moreno Villa painted on Luis's patio and labeled "The flowers I didn't plant."]

"Sometimes we were eating. Alcoriza would be there and Juanita and Alcoriza's wife, who was also called Juanita [Janet], don José would come, and Luis would get up and leave him the place of honor at the head of the table. I've never forgotten that kind of thing.

"Luis got back [from his trip to Europe], and we took up again. As usual, he had brought menus from different restaurants. 'Look, what *sole meunière* costs there, and what a fabulous sole! Look at the wine, and what an amazing wine!' Menus from the grand restaurants in Paris. One day he took us to see his *Cumbres borrascosas* [*Wuthering Heights*]. He had made it under another title, because there was an earlier film version of the novel. Once we were in the theater, Manolo Ángeles Ortiz showed up to my surprise. The three

of us sat down with Luis between us. Suddenly, I was shocked to hear a loud whistle, the sound a peasant might make. It was Buñuel. The film wasn't aligned quite right on the screen, and he was whistling at the projectionist, who fixed the problem. Luis always managed to surprise me, and he always made me feel a great affection, a great tenderness, for him.

"Last Monday he showed me his collection of firearms, which—he says—is not what it used to be. He's sold almost all of them. He used to have sixty-three arms, now he's down to twelve or fifteen…. But look, thinking of collections and going back to the question of painting, Juanita told me one day, 'We don't have anything of yours.' 'Nor will you,' I told her, 'because when we were young, I gave you a little painting, two paintings, dedicated to you. Bores gave you something, and you also had things from Viñes, and all of them were in Georgette's apartment. When Georgette died, you sold everything in the apartment. I've seen paintings of mine from 1924 or '25, dedicated to you. I saw them just by chance in the house of a friend, who bought them from a secondhand dealer. I saw a Bores there too. The Viñes is the only thing Juan Luis kept. 'I took it,' he told me, 'but the other things had to be sold.' All I could say was, 'I don't get it. Don't you Buñuels care at all about painting?' It never occurred to Luis to say, 'There are some paintings at Georgette's. I want them for my house, for my collection.' As to the paintings they have, there's the portrait Dalí painted of Luis, another that Moreno Villa, I think, painted of him and Juanita and one more, by Leonora Carrington, that came from a lottery or something. But he's not a man who will say, 'This painting has something!' He doesn't have a feeling for painting. I don't think he responds to it. What do you think?"

"Yes, I agree with you on that point, but—considering everything you've told me about Luis—do you think there might be an underlying layer of avarice in him, whether its origin is Aragonese, Arab or even Jewish?"

"Maybe. I hadn't put it in those terms, but it's very possible. Aragonese, Arab, Jewish, yes. All those influences are there."

"They affected his father too. Like jealousy. Do you really think Luis is jealous?"

"I don't think so, but what kind of jealousy are you talking about? In his relationships or his work? Because a person can be jealous about his work too. No, not him. As to the other question, look: I've never been able to figure out who Luis is. When we got together in the Closerie des Lilas, back in 1925 or '24, somebody would say—probably Luis—'I'm so pleased. We've spent two or three hours here talking, and we've never gotten on the subject of women.' I was a little taken aback, because we always talked about women: 'Look, this girl or that girl is worth chatting up, or isn't worth chatting up.' And because he never talked about women. Maybe it's a complex he has. He's never been a man to…. And that Sauras [Buñuel's cousin], who also came from Saragossa, always had two or three women in tow. Luis was different. Juanita admired him greatly because of his shoes. He wore beautiful shoes that he bought in Spain, expensive shoes. She was impressed by them and by his clothes. But he never used that finery to help him find love or make conquests. Neither did I, because I just didn't have any luck with women back then. I would have liked to. Our other friends were always talking about girls, but not Luis. He was impenetrable. I've never understood that side of him. And then, in his films, with *Un Chien andalou,* especially that one, I've just been perplexed. I can't judge him."

"But in *Un Chien andalou* there's a lot of Dalí, and you haven't told me a thing about him."

"I haven't told you anything about Dalí, because I just didn't have much to do with him, not much at all. When I left the School of Fine Arts in Madrid, he was just starting. When I finished there, I left Madrid and came to Paris (that was in '23), and he stayed on…."

"What did he look like?"

"He was a very thin young guy. He didn't have a moustache then. At least, I don't remember a moustache. When I was in Paris, I'd go to Sánchez Cuesta's bookstore to read *Le Surréalisme* … how many issues of the review came out?"

"It depends how you count them. There was *Le Surréalisme au service de la revolution*. Four issues, I think."[40] [It was immediately preceded by *La Révolution Surréaliste,* whose twelve issues came out in 1924–29.]

"So, I open one of them, and I see Dalí talking about Málaga and the coast from Málaga to Estepona. And he comes up with horrible things, that he took out his member and showed it to so-and-so, and that the girls from Málaga and the boys from Málaga…. It was disgusting. And just after I read that, Vicens tells me, 'Dalí is here, and he's brought you a painting from Emilio Prados.' The painting was one of mine. I don't know why Emilio Prados had it, and instead of sending it to me in Ronda, he decided to send it to me in Paris. So, Dalí brings it to me. When I saw Dalí I had already read that business, and I thought, 'What on earth is this guy going to tell me about Málaga and Ronda?' And he says, 'I've just come from your native land. It's marvelous; it's….' And he came up with a series of clichés, what everybody says even though he'd just written the exact opposite. I was very surprised. I don't know what else I can tell you about Dalí."

"Don't say anything else. That's enough."

"But there's one more thing. He got to Málaga one time and called José María Hinojosa, the one who wrote *La flor de California* ['The flower of California'] and was part of that group of friends. He phoned him to say, 'I'm here in Málaga,' and Hinojosa said right away, 'I'll come pick you up at your hotel' and so on…. It was a beautiful, sunny day—I know all this through José María. Anyway, Dalí came out of the hotel—I'm not sure if he was with Gala or not; she was probably there—he came out naked from the waist up—maybe totally naked—and wearing a necklace…. A necklace from Haiti or Hawaii or some place like that. 'I had planned to give him a little tour,' Hinojosa told me, 'so I did.' He was furious, because everybody in Málaga knows José María. This incident really sums up Dalí: his desire to get on people's nerves, to create a scene…. Anyway, that was in '27 or earlier. No, it was later, later on."

"It must have been in '29 or '28. Did you meet Gaston Modot?"

"Yes. I met him in Ronda, when he was making *Carmen* with Jacques Feyder…. We became good friends. And when I went to Paris to recruit extras to help finish the film, like I told you, I used to visit him at his home, and he would come by my studio, because he'd been a painter, or wanted to be one, when he was younger. Later, when he was at work on *L'Âge d'or,* we saw each other a number of times. 'Oh, Buñuel!' he told me, 'It's a real pleasure to work with him! What a director! He makes his plan, and he follows it from morning until night, and you just follow the program he's set up. He has a sense of discipline, and he's an amazing man when it comes to work even more than as a filmmaker.' He was filled with admiration for Buñuel, and he told everybody about it."

…

Louis Aragon

Paris, 19 November 1969

The poet Aragon, as we've seen, was one of the founders of surrealism, along with André Breton and Philippe Soupault, in 1924. He left the movement, along with Buñuel and several others, in the spring of 1932 to devote himself to the communist cause. Although Buñuel may have been closer to him ideologically, Aub argues that the director felt a tighter bond with Breton.

"Buñuel says that he was behind the screen [for the first showing of *Un Chien andalou*], with pebbles in his pockets, to throw at people's heads if they didn't like the film or they booed it."

"That must have been a dream. He didn't have pebbles in his pockets, and he wasn't behind the screen. He was waiting nervously for our reaction. But he didn't need to worry, because we were all full of enthusiasm."

"A Spanish magazine says that Buñuel belonged to the Spanish Communist Party from 1932 to '35. I'd like to know if that's true. I'm not the one who's saying it. It came out in the magazine."

"I can't answer that. I have no way of knowing if he belonged or didn't belong to a foreign party. What I do know is that he belonged to the French Party."

"That's exactly what he told Roces in 1936 when Roces asked him to come to Spain. He told him, 'No. I belong to the French Party. You'd have to ask them, etc."

"He did belong to the French Party. That's true. At that time, he was here, and Buñuel left the surrealist group the same time I did and for the same reasons."

"Was that in '27, '28 or '28?"

"No. It happened in 1930, after I came back from Kharkov."[41]

"So he joined the Party about the same time you did?"

"Ah. I don't know when he joined. I never took the trouble to find out. But he did join the Party, and he was a member of the Party."

"How long did he remain a member?"

"I don't know. He must have dropped out of the French Party by the time of the war. I don't know exactly when…."

"I can tell you what, in 1936, he told Roces. When Roces asked him, 'What are you doing here? You have to go to Madrid,' Buñuel responded, 'I should go to Madrid, but that depends on what the French Party decides.' So, in 1936 he was in the French Party."

"Then we have to believe that he was still a member. I don't have a clear memory of that, but I do have a very clear memory of earlier, because when I returned from Kharkov we had some very unpleasant dealings with a person—who's still alive—who was excluded from the Party. It was someone who, at that time, was a very important person, and he tried to exclude us from the Party because we were surrealists.[42] There was a meeting in his office of the ones of us who were surrealists and members of the Party. It wasn't just Buñuel and I. Thirion, Sadoul, Unik and so on were also there. Who was the sixth? There were six of us. Maxime Alexandre! So, at that time, he was definitely a member of the [French] Party. Afterwards, I don't know what he did, but at that moment he belonged."[43]

…

[They talk about surrealism. Aub asks Aragon about Benjamin Péret. Aragon praises his poetry, saying] "He comes from a deeply rooted tradition, the tradition of the baroque poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a great poet in that vein, a vein that had been lost."

"I asked you about him, because, at heart, there's no poet that Buñuel prefers to Péret."

"Of course. What the French baroque is for Péret, the Spanish baroque is for Buñuel."

"Exactly. That inclination toward the baroque means that Buñuel sees theology, in cinematic terms, as a series of theological *gags* [in English], one after the other, like Max Linder. You can mix them up; they're interchangeable. There's no story in *La Voie Lactée*. He doesn't want to tell stories."

"I adore *La Voie Lactée,* it's a splendid film, and I only have one reproach."

"Which is?"

"It's not a reproach, but there's a piece missing. It's missing the first station, the departure, because the pilgrimage to Compostela always started in Paris, at the Church of Santiago de Haut Pas, which is on the corner of what's now called the rue de l'Abbé de l'Epée. Apart from that little detail, which really isn't very important, I love the film. And, it's all mixed up. Someone would have to figure out what matters most to him: the theology or the fact that the theology is mixed up with other things, because he usually gives theologians a hard time."

"I agree, but why don't you tell me what you really think?"

"But, that is what I think! That's really what I think. Elsa always cites one thing in the film which is really extraordinary and so typical of Buñuel. It's the point when one of the characters utters a terrible blasphemy, and immediately after that lightening strikes right next to him. The character doesn't even take it in: it's the miracle. He denies the possibility of a miracle. The miracle happens, but when it happens, it's not for him; it's for us, the alienated viewers. But for the character who's involved, the lightening that strikes when he says certain words is just a natural phenomenon. That's Buñuel."

…

Luis Quintanilla

Paris, 6 June 1969

The painter and printmaker, Quintanilla took part in the assault on the military barracks in Madrid and the Siege of the Alcázar in Toledo. Then, in France, he set up what became known as the "Quintanilla Network" to defend the Republicans from the far more organized espionage service on Franco's side. This was the first effort on the Republican side to set up a spy network.

"We"—Buñuel and I—"met each other here, at the embassy. After leaving the barracks in Madrid and all that business, I was asked to control the Spanish-Basque border, from the French side, to see what…. And we needed to get organized, and to look for the means to set up an effective information service, what they call espionage today. And we managed to…."[44] Anyway, they introduced me to Buñuel in the embassy here as someone who could be useful to me. Apparently, he knew a section of waiters, or I don't know what, in the

Communist Party that he could get to help us. But Buñuel's usefulness, at least in relation to what I was doing and espionage, was limited to picking up the money that I requested in Biarritz and sending it to me and, occasionally, using a code we had set up, to get important information to me directly. But I usually communicated with Ogier Preteceille and, if something really serious came up, then I'd take a train or drive up here to Paris to speak directly with whoever it was, normally Araquistáin. And that went on up to the time Araquistáin left, when Negrín came in as Prime Minister, but as far as Buñuel…."

"Okay. You were telling me earlier that you got mail at the bookstore and that it served as…."

"No, Buñuel took care of that…. I think he had a sister-in-law who had a bookstore…"

"He did, yes."

"…here, in Paris, around…"

"The rue Gay Lussac."

"I don't remember."

"In the Latin Quarter."

"Yes, right, in the Latin Quarter. And I sent things to the sister-in-law. I think we addressed them to Monsieur Dubois, to use a really ordinary name, but that lady served as a mail box, that's all. He had given me the address, and I wrote to him there—no?—to Monsieur Dubois or Dumond, or something like that."

"Did you have any relation there, through Buñuel, with Vicens?"

"No."

"Or with Sánchez Ventura?"

"No. We didn't have anything to do with each other…. Sánchez Ventura, Sánchez Ventura. I met up with him on two of those quick trips that I had to make to Spain, and when he found out—I don't now if it was through Buñuel or not—that I was going to give up the position, he was determined that I pass it on to him. But I didn't pay any attention to him; I didn't have anything to do with that business. Anyway … who was I to hand out positions in the war? They had asked me to do that, and don't think for a minute that it was an easy business, because there were three occasions when I had to pass over to the enemy side. And on top of it all…."

"On top of it all, Buñuel told me that at the end they were sending up balloons, that we were sending up balloons that carried propaganda to the other side."

"No, no, no."

"He did it with you, didn't he?"

"No, no, no. I never did that…. We had more serious things to do than that. Besides, the whole business of propaganda was useless. That's just one of the proofs that he had nothing to do with those matters, because if he'd tried, he'd have seen that it was just a waste of time and money. And it's what makes it easiest to catch you. But no, absolutely not. Look! The best thing an espionage or counter-espionage service can do—as far as I know, the English really are the masters of the art—is to open an office saying: 'We accept all sorts of information here. Espionage against whatever.' And I can tell you that out of one hundred idiots who show up, one of them is going to have something useful, something that's serious. That's the best way to do it, and you don't even try to fool anybody. I had done all the flashy cover-up. I had a document saying I was an inspector of consulates in France, of Spanish consulates in France, no? Right away, twenty or thirty days after I started,

they knew exactly what I was doing. Queipo de Llano started attacking me on the radio.[45] As far as what Buñuel did…. I don't know what he must have told you, but I know better."

"He says he didn't do anything!"

"He didn't do anything, right?

"Well, maybe not, but I'm not convinced."

"Who's not convinced?"

"I'm not."

"That he didn't do anything?"

"No. He says he didn't do anything."

"Well, there you have it."

"Except for collecting money."

"I think that's true…. I believe that. I believe it, because I can remember an exact detail. I'm not sure if it was Commander Hungría [unidentified] or one of the other ones who came here and managed to sabotage some of our planes. I sent out a notice so that they could watch him and so on. But, in fact, we lost the planes and, as far as I know, Buñuel never said or communicated anything. He wasn't the one who would have taken care of it, but he never communicated…."

"But did he even know? Did you accuse him of it?"

"Eh?"

"Did you accuse him of it?"

"I communicated, 'This is going on.' That's what our communications were like: 'Watch out for such and such.' Right? 'This thing.' And I communicated with him about it. He was the one who was supposed to receive my information. Our people didn't do anything, and we lost the planes. But, on top of it…"

"Did you write to the bookstore?"

"…they published how they got our planes."

"So those planes wound up on Franco's side?"

"We lost some of them, and the others wound up on Franco's side. Yes, it's absolutely true. They themselves published the information about what they'd done."

"Where is it published?"

"In their literature."

"Where?"

"I don't have a single book here…."

"Because I haven't read any more than the literature from our side."

"No, you've got to read the other. Because of the planes, and anything else that came up, I forced myself to read their literature."

…

"I think Buñuel got six thousand francs a month! It was part—eh?—part of the expenses that I sent in, the six thousand was stuck in there, I know."

"Who did you send the expenses to?"

"Eh?"

"The list of expenses, did you send them to the embassy or to Valencia or…?"

"No. I sent them here, to the embassy [in Paris]."

"Who did you send them to? To Prete … to Ogier? Or to…?"

"No. I sent them through him [Buñuel]. I think it was through him. I didn't give a

break-down of the expenses, not in our kind of business, just the total sum, and that varied. Sometimes it was more; sometimes, less."

"And…."

"I had a secretary there, in Biarritz [Saturnino Lasa], who had an import-export business of Spanish fruit and vegetables. He had a van and a personal car, which we used to take people somewhere or fetch them. And he acted as my secretary. He was the one who had to send in the expenses. I didn't write anything. When something came up, I picked up the phone, and using a method we'd agreed on, I contacted Ogier, because I knew Ogier from the other war, when he went to Spain to get away from France."

Gustavo Pittaluga

In addition to working with Luis when he was dubbing for Warner Brothers in Madrid and in the Motion Picture Division in New York, after moving to Mexico, Pittaluga provided the music for Los olvidados, Subida al cielo *and chose and arranged the diegetic music for* Viridiana.

…

[Pittaluga explains that, although he and Buñuel overlapped at the Residencia de Estudiantes, he was in the children's section—from 1920 to 1922; the Instituto-Escuela, a progressive school that covered both the primary and secondary years, occupied space at the Residencia—and Buñuel was much older. Then Buñuel left for Paris, and they did not see each other again until they were in New York after the Civil War had ended.]

"Gustavo Durán was working at the Museum of Modern Art with him. Buñuel had had a hard time in the United States and then, miraculously, had gotten a position as head of the production of documentaries, which were really propaganda films arranged through Nelson Rockefeller. I was lucky enough to get there just at the point when Gustavo Durán was leaving, and so five or six days after reaching New York, I took his place. It was a huge piece of luck. Luis always told me, 'You were born lucky. The rest of us have been struggling to survive, and you've found a job five days after getting here.' So we started working there together, and then after work we lived almost like a family. In New York, at that time, the European refugees lived like one big family, no? And the Spaniards were even closer. Almost everybody lived on top of each other. We saw each other constantly, and we formed a strong bond that was very tender, very human, right? And that's when we really became close friends."

"Did Luis speak good English then?"

"His English was bad, with a ferocious Aragonese accent. He knows the language well, but as to speaking it, he's a disaster. His French is marvelous, fluent, lightening fast, but his English—just the opposite. It just doesn't come out."

"Okay. And those films, they were publicity films?"

"No. They were ostensibly documentaries, but they were almost always military or, at least, they had a military objective or a politically military objective directed for…."

"What year was that?"

"1940 on. During the European war and then after Pearl Harbor. They might be good,

or okay or barely passable. We reworked the films there, and totally rewrote the text, right? And they were *soi disant* documentaries that were sent, mainly, to Hispano-America. There were five versions: English, French, Portuguese, Spanish and, I think, Italian, but they were primarily directed at Hispano-America. They were films of propaganda about the war that we polished, reworked, re-edited. We did a good job on them."

"Buñuel stayed there until Dalí's book came out, or did he leave before that?"

"His departure coincided with the publication of Dalí's book. Absolutely, chronologically. I can even give you the dates. Cardinal Spellman took advantage of Dalí's book to point out that for some time American Catholics had been saying just what Dalí said about Buñuel. The Catholic clergy in the United States had been nosing around for quite some time, and they now rested their case on Dalí's book and on the fact that it was very hard to make a public as vast as the Spanish-speaking nations understand that an anarchist and a son-of-a-bitch pinky was the spokesman for the United States. But I'm sure that…."

"Was it McCarthy's doing?"

"No. That was before McCarthy's time."

"Because Luis makes a big deal of it's being McCarthy."

"Dalí made life impossible for all of us, for Gustavo Durán, for me, for Buñuel, for every poor soul who might be classified as pink; he fucked us over by denouncing all of us, but that happened long before the McCarthy business. It cost Luis his job. He left the Museum, and then—I'm not sure if it was Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer or Paramount or which company—one of them [actually Warner Brothers] gave him a contract as head of dubbing in Hollywood. And he had to leave Hollywood too, because they made life impossible for him there as well."[46]

Oscar Dancigers

Dancigers, a Russian-born film producer whom Buñuel met in Paris, moved to Mexico in the early forties. He enticed Buñuel to that country in 1946 by offering him what would become Gran Casino and after that, produced a number of the director's other films: El gran calavera*,* Los olvidados*,* La hija del engaño*,* El bruto *[*El Bruto*],* Él*,* Abismos de pasión*,* Robinson Crusoe *and* La Mort en ce jardín*.*

"Denise Tual talked to me about Buñuel, who was in Hollywood, living a pretty sad life, since he was dubbing American films into Spanish. He worked for one of the great American studios—I don't remember which—and he really felt depressed. I said that we'd have to bring Buñuel to Mexico, where he could work and make films. This is what happened. He arrived with his wife and his son [actually two sons], and he made a few films with me. We were looking for a story. I was just starting off in Mexico too, and I didn't have a lot of resources. He wanted to make a commercial film, and he remembered a story that somebody had written in Hollywood, I don't remember who, maybe Sergio Weber [actually Nino Veber]. It was a very ordinary story. At that time I had Jorge Negrete—a great star throughout Latin America—under contract, and also Libertad Lamarque, who had come from Buenos Aires. We had to use both of them in the film. It was called *Gran Casino,* and it was pretty bad. My memory is not so great now, but I think we also made a

film based on a Spanish play: *El gran calavera.* That was with Fernando Soler.[47] I gave it to Buñuel, because he was desperate for work. I gave it to him to read, and he told me that he would direct it, that he needed it, but that he refused to put his name on it as the director."

"It's not the first time he's done that."

"He was thinking up a pseudonym. I told him that he would have to use his own name, because otherwise I'd have trouble selling the film and so on. Finally, he agreed, and it was a big success. After that we started looking for something else to do. One day Buñuel told me he'd heard a sweet story about a kid who sold lottery tickets; he can't get anybody to buy the last ticket, and he's very upset, because he needs to turn in the money, which he doesn't have, but it turns out that that ticket wins the big prize.

I told him, 'No. We've got to do something more interesting.' At that time, Buñuel was very close to Luis Alcoriza."

"Were they very close, or did you introduce them? Buñuel told me that you introduced them."

"I did, but they became good friends almost immediately, and they started working together. They went to see the reports of the Children's Court, and that's where they found the idea for *Los olvidados.* That was a film that everybody worked on together with tremendous enthusiasm. It was not so easy to make, because we had to find a number of child actors. Luis doesn't really like actors, so they wound up picking actors who weren't very well known, and they made the film. When it was premiered in Mexico, it was a catastrophe."

"Don't you remember that I worked on that film?"

"Did you? I have a faint memory.… No, I'm not sure."

"I didn't put my name in the credits, because I didn't want the six percent, the business of the union. You called me, and I worked two weeks with Buñuel."

"The film, as you'll remember, was a catastrophe at the time, because people just hated it. It didn't go over well anywhere in Latin America, but, in spite of that, it was the film that Favre Le Bret chose to represent Mexico in the Cannes Festival, and it won the prize, the Jury Award.[48] It was the first time that happened to a Mexican film, and there was a huge amount of publicity in all the newspapers, and articles and everything else. They showed it in a small theater, El Prado, and it was a hit. That doesn't mean the film, which cost very little to make, which was actually cheap, ever covered its cost in Latin America. It didn't sell in a lot of places; it was prohibited in Argentina. They didn't give it a permit in other countries. It was prohibited in Italy and, of course, in Spain. From the commercial point of view, it was still a disaster. Afterward, people decided it was one of the great classics."

"And is it still losing money?"

"I don't own it anymore. I sold it for an insignificant sum. After all that, Buñuel and I still made two or three films together."

"*Susana*?"

"No. That one's not mine. Mine is called … *Quintín*, which was a piece that Buñuel liked a lot; he'd already made it as a producer in Spain, but he was determined to do it again."

"Did he sign it?"

"Yes."

"Didn't Ugarte sign it?"

"I don't think so. You mean as director?"

"Yes."

"No. In Spain…."

"I mean in Mexico."

"In Mexico, I'm almost sure Buñuel signed it."

"What was the film called?"

"….*Quintín el amargao.*"

"It's not in Buñuel's filmography. Not in any of them."[49]

"Ah! Then I don't know. Afterwards he made *Robinson Crusoe*, that was an idea of…."

"I know it. You can find copies of *Robinson* everywhere, because the Americans made copies and gave them to film archives all over."

"Maybe so. Before *Robinson Crusoe,* he made a film that really surprised me and that I liked a lot. We worked on it with Buñuel and Alcoriza. It was *Él,* with Arturo de Córdova."

"I saw it again, not long ago, with Buñuel, and he wasn't very happy with it, because he had good memories of the film, and when he saw it again, he was disappointed."

"I made another one with Buñuel, a Franco-Mexican film that was the first co-production ever made in Mexico. It was a disaster too. It was called *La Mort en ce jardin*. Before we made it, they had proposed another Franco-Mexican film. That was after the agreement of cultural collaboration between France and Mexico was signed. Buñuel and I came to Paris, and they proposed a story called *La Fièvre monte à el Pao*. It was an awful story."

"That's true."

"Buñuel made it with another producer. Around then, somebody proposed *La Mort en ce jardin* by a Belgian author.[50] It was an adventure film, set in Brazil, in the Amazon. We contracted the actors here: Simone Signoret, Georges Marchal, Michel Piccoli. It wasn't very good."

"Nor very bad."

"In any event, from the commercial point of view, it *was* very bad."

Eduardo Ducay

Along with Joaquín Gurruchaga, Ducay was one of the Executive Producers—as Época Films—of Tristana.

"Do you think *La Voie Lactée* is, as some people say, a surrealistic film?"

"No, absolutely not. The one that is a little surrealistic, of course, is *Belle de Jour.* You can call that one a surrealistic film, because it does have one surrealistic element: the carriage and the horses that pass between reality and irreality. The solution isn't provided; it's up to the spectator to find it. In my judgement, it's the most surrealistic film Buñuel ever made, apart from *L'Âge d'or* and *Un Chien andalou*."

"I agree. *La Voie Lactée* isn't exactly a realistic film, but it isn't a surrealistic film either."

"I think not."

"Then what is it?"

"It's Buñuel's own interpretation of religion. I don't know exactly how to explain: it's the New Testament as seen by Buñuel."

"'The New Testament as seen by Buñuel.' That's not a bad definition. By the way, *Los olvidados*…."

"They wanted to present the film before the Cannes Film Festival. Luis wanted to present it to his group of friends. He made a list. There were about two-hundred people. There wouldn't be enough space in a projection room, so they had to rent a small film theater. They rented Studio Twenty-Eight, and I remember that he invited Aragon and Breton. Breton said that he wouldn't go if Aragon was going, and Aragon said he wouldn't go if Breton was going. They were like cats and dogs."

"How did it end up?"

"The film was a huge success."

"I mean how did the other business end up? Did Breton go, or…?"

"Aragon is the one who went."

"Because that situation is at heart the one that Buñuel has always struggled with: the conflict between Aragon and Breton, between communism and surrealism."

"It's sad to see that two exceptional people like Aragon and Breton have wound up hating each other for political reasons."

"You're right."

"They separated and a sort of loathing developed between people who should be more tolerant and understanding."

"Two of my oldest and dearest friends, Aragon and Malraux, don't see or speak to each other. But, in spite of that, when I'm here in Paris, they do see and speak to each other. I'm the only possible connection between them."

"But they see each other?"

"No."

"What about the picturesque incidents and legal machinations that happened during the filming of *Tristana*?"

"Okay, from the time Joaquín Gurruchaga and I were in Mexico (I remember we ate dinner with you at Luis's one day), we had one major concern: whether the film would be authorized here in Spain, or not. We went to Mexico with the firm intention of making the film, whether it was authorized here or not. If it wasn't authorized, of course, there would be constant problems. In spite of all that, we had something that's fundamental in filmmaking: financial backing. And we were resolved to make the film under whatever nationality and in whatever place, providing that Buñuel agreed.

"So, with that possibility in mind, in the contract we signed with Luis in Mexico, at the Club Libanés, to be precise, in that contract we included a clause saying that if the film could not be shot in Spain, then we would shoot the exteriors in Portugal and the interiors in France. That was in March [of 1971]. From that point on, we began to work on things here. We took our time in presenting the official request, because for a while we weren't sure if making an application was even worth the effort. A State of Exception had been proclaimed in Spain at that point, and with all the political unrest, we were afraid that the administration would just let out application lie without making a decision. Finally, we made up our minds to present it, and we did so, I think, in May. Then we had to wait for a response, for the Directorate of Culture to give us a definite opinion so we'd know what

to expect. As producers, it was much better for us to make the film in Spain, as a Spanish film. The Directorate of Culture devoted almost three months to the matter without figuring out what to do with it. I'm not sure they ever really told us 'No.' They gave us a run-around. We found out unofficially that the plenary session of the Censorship Commission had authorized the screenplay without any comments, and that what terrified the Ministry and made the functionaries freeze up was fear of Luis Buñuel, fear that he'd play another trick on them as he had in *Viridiana*.

"Anyway, since we had contracted Luis for definite dates, and we had other important obligations as well, the moment came when we had to send a telegram telling him to come to Spain, because even if the film was not allowed here, we would still go ahead with our plans [in Portugal and France]. The story of all our conversations and all our attempts to sound out people in the Ministry during that period of time goes on and on. You can imagine it. The director, Robles Piquer, who had seemed very cordial and understanding at first, wouldn't even see us. At the same time that we were involved in these efforts, we were scouting for locations in Portugal, and we got Luis to go there. He didn't want to, but he wound up liking Portugal. Little by little he began to relate to what he saw of the country. I remember that on one trip to look at locations, he said, 'It's all about prejudice, Ducay. I always thought this country was a shithole, and it turns out that it's wonderful.'

"All of this activity was making waves in Spain. They found out that he had gone to Portugal, that we had asked for permission to shoot there. Later, I don't doubt the news got out that we were talking about a contract with studios in Lisbon, the Tobis Studios, since we were also thinking about shooting the interiors in Portugal. On top of that, the Italians were putting pressure on the Spaniards, because our co-producers in Italy were very happy to make a film with Buñuel, who'd been named a Master of Film in the last Venice Film Festival. They were disconcerted that a film that was so clearly Spanish should be prohibited in Spain, not just as a Spanish film, but that even the shoot was prohibited. There was a protest and some pressure was put on the Spaniards. Ethel Monaco, the president of the Italian film association, sent someone to Madrid to talk to the minister, and that person was turned away. The interview wasn't exactly denied, but they claimed that the dates didn't work, and they proposed a much later date. So that emissary had to go back home again. All of that was part of the decision to not make a decision. Finally, one day, when all the measures had been taken to film in Portugal, when Joaquín, Luis and I were eating dinner in our regular restaurant with Víctor Zapata, one of our associate producers, Luis mentioned that he had a friend in Mexico who was a good friend of Fraga Iribarne's and that he could send him a telegram.[51] We said, 'Yes. Do it.' When we left the restaurant, Joaquín and I went with Luis to the Torre de Madrid, where he was staying and where he had his friend Rafael Méndez's address. We wrote the text for the telegram, and Joaquín and I went down to the telegraph office on the other side of the Plaza de España to send it. A few days later—Luis was in Portugal then—Rafael Méndez turned up in Madrid and saw the minister. Apparently, Méndez was in Venice, and they sent on the telegram to him there. Instead of going back to America, he [went to Spain and] showed Buñuel's telegram to the minister, who said he'd like to see Luis. The ministry called our office, and we arranged a meeting. Luis saw the minister. As I understand, it was a quick, decisive, but very cordial interview, in which the minister asked him not to overstep the margins that Spanish censorship allowed. But that his hope was that Buñuel would make not just that film in Spain,

but others as well, if he so desired. The film was authorized immediately. And that's the end of the story."

Juan Larrea

The poet and essayist Larrea was a member of the Ultraísta group in Madrid in the twenties and also coincided with Buñuel in Paris and in Mexico and made an uncredited contribution to Los olvidados. *The following comes from a letter Larrea mailed to Aub from Córdoba, Argentina, on 12 September 1968.*

[Larrea explains that he saw Buñuel in Paris from 1927 on, but only occasionally, when they would get together at Larrea's studio to eat paella and drink Gordon's Gin until daybreak and, later, during the Civil War, when they were both involved in propaganda and ran into each other at the embassy. Larrea was involved with the Spanish American poets (Vallejo, Huidobro, etc.) rather than the surrealists.]

"But in Mexico, we got together in 1948–49 almost every Sunday, preferably in his house, but occasionally in mine, with other friends as well.

…

"Later the business with *Ilegible, hijo de flauta* ['Illegible, Son of a Flute,' a polite way of saying "son of a whore"]. One day he projected *Un Chien andalou* at his house for twenty or twenty-five friends. Somebody came up with the idea—taken up with enthusiasm by a small group—that we should make a film together, because, from my illustrations for *Cuadernos,* they deduced that I was full of images. I resisted for a few weeks, since I really didn't think I could handle the language of film, which, like all languages, demands practice. But faced with my friends' insistence, seconded by Luis, I gave in.

"I told them the only thing I could think of was a story I had started back in 1927. I had read a few scenes to [the poet] Gerardo Diego a couple of years later, and he'd commented on the very cinematic quality of the writing. Buñuel could tell me if what I had pictured was cinematic and if it related at all to his personal style. I remembered only the broad outlines of the story, started in 1927 and never finished, because I didn't know how to continue it and much less how to finish it, and I'd lost what I had during the war. When he heard it, Luis exclaimed, 'Yes, it's a film!' Everything took off from there. I remembered a little more of it, and then with his technical help and some ideas from him, I composed a sort of anti-screenplay that pleased not just our friends, but Dancigers, Luis's producer, as well. Dancigers tried to round up enough dollars to make a short piece for Film-Club showings. All Dancigers's efforts failed in spite of Luis's great enthusiasm (he had no work at the time). In the meanwhile, I helped him adapt Arniches's *El último mono* ['The Last Monkey'], which never made it to celluloide either. Before I left for New York, I collaborated a little on the script for *Los olvidados.* He'll confirm that.

"I was interested in *Ilegible* for other reasons. From the time I gave up on the story in 1932, because I didn't know what to do with it, the facts of my life had pretty much taken care of that. I began to see it as a kind of prediction of my own life that was intimately identified with the Spanish catastrophe and our emigration to the New World. With that idea in mind, I could continue the story and give it an ending in Mexico.

"Seven years later, when I was living in Córdoba [Argentina], I suddenly got a telegram from Luis announcing that they were ready to film *Ilegible.* After some discussion, with the idea of meeting the requisites of the Mexican filmmakers' union, I agreed reluctantly to the credits reading: 'Story Line by Juan Larrea, based on a short story by the same author, which has disappeared. Cinematic Adaptation and Direction by Luis Buñuel.' He urged me to get to work and pad the story line a bit, because the film was going to be longer. My daughter Luciana and I thought up a number of scenes that we liked a lot. We signed the contract in May of 1957, but I had reservations about it, because to my mind one of the new scenes, involving some Jehovah's Witnesses, was absolutely essential, and Buñuel was hesitant about it because it would be expensive to film. They sent me an advance of 1,500 dollars in checks that I returned almost immediately in an act of defiance and annulled the contract as soon as I found out that Luis had no intention of including that scene, for the reason I mentioned earlier.

"A few years later, in January of 1963, Luis wrote me again about the same business. My daughter had died by that time, so I agreed to let him make the film however he liked, but with the following introduction: '*Ilegible, hijo de flauta.* Part of a cinematic story by Juan and Luciana Larrea, adapted by Luis Buñuel.' He was planning to make a kind of mosaic film using 'Gradiva,' along with stories by Carlos Fuentes and Julio Cortázar. The project didn't come off because of the other people involved in it, but Luis always had the idea of some day making a film of *Ilegible.* And that's the end of the story."[52]

Emmanuel Roblès

Roblès, an Algerian-French novelist, was the author of Cela s'appelle l'aurore, *which inspired Bunuel's film of the same title in French.*

"When did you meet Buñuel?"

"I saw him in Mexico. We had agreed to work together. There was a first version of the script, and, very loyally, he asked me if I had any objections. I showed him, and he modified, I think, a few things, but overall it was pretty much done. You know that Buñuel always changes things even when he's shooting. He came upon some things that I'll point out to you, because they are 'Buñuel things' and very smart.

"Here's an example: in my book, Sandro's confusion after his wife dies. Sandro is a farm laborer, victimized by the cruelty or the indifference of Gerson, the owner of the estate. He's desperate. I translated his desperation into a dozen or so pages in a very particular style where I mix sensations, emotions and impressions. He's seated in a café, leaning on a table, his head in his hands, and what goes through his head is this sense of desperation I convey to the reader. After that, he walks along the beach, where, later on, Gerson will be killed. Buñuel told me: 'In literature, this is excellent. You create your character, but I have to convert that into images with my camera. The camera will show a man seated at a table with his head in his hands. Later you'll see him walk along the beach. All the camera would show is the man from the outside, not the inner workings that you convey through literature. I need to do something different to show his feelings of desolation and rebellion.' He asked me how to fix it. I suggested a few things, because he was treating me with great

consideration, and we were having a good time. I suggested he use a voice in off. 'That's out of style.' So, I gave him two or three other suggestions. 'That won't work.'

"He didn't say anything after that, but here's his solution. I'm telling you, because I think it's brilliant. It's the transposition of literature to film. He didn't use the character's gestures. Instead, he made Sandro walk under some very low arches, low and humid, that give the sensation of someone being crushed. Sandro lurches from side to side as if he were drunk. He's not drunk, but in his desperation he lurches and utters a few words that express—under those arches—his sense of being crushed until he reaches some iron bars that close off the end of that alleyway. It's the cul-de-sac that can only end in death. And that symbol of the iron bars reappears at the end of the film, when Sandro commits suicide exactly there.

"That's one of his solutions to a literary problem. There are others that are strictly cinematic. For example, a series of symbols: let's say cats. Cats appear every time something is going to go wrong. In Buñuel's bestiary, there are other animals, like the cock, which appears in *El bruto,* or the cock and the hen that appear in various films. Apart from his bestiary, there are other extraordinary images, but you can be sure that a cat will always announce a misfortune. And the turtle. That's another thing. The cocks, the hens, the cats and the donkey, they always announce the destruction of the individual. They're always symbolic, but always part of the representation too. There was a love scene in my book. Buñuel had told me, 'Love scenes are not my thing. I'm no good at them.' In fact, there's a lot of tenderness in Buñuel, and he's shown it. When I told him so, he said, 'All those love scenes are the same. They embrace; they embrace again; they kiss; they kiss again. They all look alike. Every shot hits its mark. For me, tenderness is not just expressed in a kiss. There has to be a way to show a profound love, a profound feeling.'

"So he gave me a scene that wasn't in the book but that he would create through the images. He gave me the script and told me, 'Nobody is here now.' Ferry and the other collaborators had gone.[53] 'It's up to you. Let's make a *sketch* [in English]. It's easy. You should do it.' I drank half a liter of coffee. I sat down in front of my typewriter, and I wrote a love scene that, for me, was the pinnacle of love scenes, very Shakespearian, very … whatever you like. Buñuel read it that night. We ate supper with Lucia Bosè and Claude Géret's"—probably Claude Jaeger's—"representative at a restaurant. He didn't say a word. The next day, during the shoot, I realized that he wasn't using my text at all. He told me, 'You gave me a theatrical text. It's theater. It's not film. You can't express a love scene through words in film; it has to be through an image.'

"And then he shot that scene you know, Max. That scene, to me, shows his genius, his brilliance for movies. He came up and told me, 'In a love letter, a woman can express her love simply by saying what she's done that day. She doesn't need to say, "I adore you, you're my lover, the only man for me." A woman can show her greatest affection in the most every-day way, just by what she does day after day.' I remember that expression: 'I great love letter can just say, "I got up this morning, I did such and such, I took care of the baby, I did this and that.' etc. That can be the mark of the greatest tenderness. You don't have to carry on like Chateaubriand [who gave vent to the passions in his novels].'

"So he tried it out. You see the protagonist arrive. He's not in his own house; he's in his girlfriend's house. He gets comfortable. He sits down as he would at home. He gets undressed. He goes to bed. You can see that he feels good when Lucia Bosè approaches

him. She says, 'I've been thinking about you.' As an author, I was concerned, wondering what kind of gift he would give her. It would be awful if he gave her a ring or something like that. But no, he was thinking about her, and while he was making his rounds as a doctor, he found a little turtle, a young turtle. And she tells him, 'I'll call her Clara.' These are everyday gestures, very simple gestures, but in that simple scene there's a very real expression of love that the image conveys perfectly. You don't even see the characters now. The camera abandons Lucia Bosè; it abandons the turtle, who's upside down, a little agitated. The only thing you see are the lower extremities of the characters and the turtle, moving its little legs. The scene has such an erotic charge that you immediately assume the characters are in bed together. And this wink, this series of apparently simple shots, produces—and I've seen it a number of times—a scene of both tenderness and carnal love, not just platonic affection, but sex. And the image of the turtle is strongly evocative and suggestive."

[He talks about the well known image of Christ in the film, which is based both on his novel and on what Roblès actually saw and photographed as a correspondent in Italy during World War II: a bombed out town, with a very battered statue of Christ, which is crisscrossed by telephone wires.]

"Buñuel conveyed the image, using—I think—the beautiful Christ from Amiens Cathedral, and he's covered it with electrical insulators. He creates a surrealistic image that I really like, but it's not at all like the initial image I used. It's his own idea, very funny, very good and very surrealistic. Like the scene in the police station, with Dalí's *Christ* and a pair of handcuffs on top of the complete works of Paul Claudel. One day, on his way to the studio, Buñuel saw the complete works of Claudel in a bookstore on the Rue Raspail. He bought them and put them on top of a table at the police station, and then he put the handcuffs on top of the books. In the film, the police chief picks up his hat and gloves, and then you see, hanging beside a cabinet, Salvador Dalí's *Christ,* that famous Christ pictured from a high angle. In the trial run, that episode made everybody laugh, but among the audience was Madame Claudel-Nantée, Claudel's second daughter. She sent me a furious letter announcing that she was going to sue us. Her husband told me not to worry: she'd get over it in time. Buñuel insisted he was right: 'That Claudel is a cop.' [As to Dalí, Buñuel said], 'He's shameless, shameless.' He also used that epithet referring to the Pope, and that's true, because the old Pope had collaborated with the Nazis, and he'd blessed Franco's cannons."[54]

Julio Alejandro de Castro

Julio Alejandro, poet, playwright, essayist and fellow Aragonese, was one of Buñuel's favorite co-writers, collaborating on Abismos de pasión, Nazarín, Viridiana, Simón del desierto *and* Tristana, *and probably—although he's uncredited—on* El angel exterminador.

[Julio Alejandro starts:] "What I want to make clear today is the way Buñuel ended *Simón del desierto*. As everybody knows, the film was only half done. One day at noon, Buñuel gave the order to break off so that everybody could eat lunch. This was in the Mezquital Valley. The cook came up, 'There was no money for food.' 'Pick up everything,' Buñuel announced. 'The film has ended.' That gesture says a lot about the director: his rage

at not having enough money, his pleasure in a good meal and his absolute determination to set up a plan and to follow it. These are virtues—or defects—that he obviously picked up in France and North America."

…

"For Luis, the great attraction of surrealism was its ferocious protest against the bourgeois mentality that reigned in Spain, probably with greater force than anywhere else in the world at that time. That was exactly what attracted him: the violent, sometimes ferocious protest against everything that was established, everything that seemed fixed forever and that was a result of centuries of a terribly closed bourgeoisie."

"Which he was a part of."

"Which he was a part of and, furthermore, in which he felt, at least up to a point, very comfortable. I'll tell you a little anecdote that proves my point. He told me that one time at a party in Paris the host's daughter, a little girl about twelve years old, went into the room where everybody was and, instead of greeting the gentlemen in the usual way, she opened everybody's fly. Luis was just cracking up with laughter when he told me this story. He thought it was brilliant. And I, who knew him pretty well, asked, 'You think this is so funny now, and you thought it was hilarious when it happened. If it had been a daughter of yours, how would you have liked it?' He answered immediately, without a thought: 'I'd kill her.'"

"I don't doubt it for a minute. That's what Luis is like, but on that point, he was just following Breton's precepts. Breton always said that the work they did in connection to surrealism had nothing to do with life. When did you start working with Buñuel?"

"The first film I made with Buñuel was *Abismos de pasión*. Our preparation was a little odd. Like all his fellow surrealists, Luis loved the book. He thought it was splendid, magnificent. But he hadn't read it again since that period. So, when they asked him to do something that he'd like, he thought immediately of *Wuthering Heights*. Once everything was arranged for the film, he read the book again, and—it's odd—he didn't like it nearly as much as the first time. But he had agreed to make the film, and he had to do it. Then, Dancigers contracted Dino Maiuri and me as scriptwriters, because Dino's wife, Irasema Dilian, was going to star. We started working, and I remember clearly that I was the one Luis talked to about the script. He asked me to avoid all love scenes. That wasn't going to be easy, writing a script based on *Wuthering Heights* without any love scenes. He had understood right away that it wasn't a book about love, but just the opposite, a novel about hatred. Whatever value the film has comes from that realization. The film follows the novel much more faithfully than the American version, because it emphasizes that brutal, enduring loathing that is an essential part of the novel. Anyway, when he told me, 'I don't want any love scenes,' I had to really think hard, because I didn't know how to handle the problem. But one day I had the idea of putting the two protagonists in the garden at the same time some workers were slaughtering a pig. And that love scene with the screams of the pig that was being slaughtered in the background appealed to Buñuel, and it went into the film."

"How do you explain Luis's aversion to love scenes in all his films? It doesn't have anything to do with surrealism."

"There's no relation to surrealism. I think it comes from a sense of shame related to any sort of sexual contact or amorous relationship. That sort of thing produces a kind of physical repulsion in him. So much so that he leaves a lot of the films he has to attend halfway through or even earlier. If there's a kiss on the screen, he covers his face as if he

were embarrassed. I think it's the same thing that happens with certain melodramas. One time, for example, he was obligated to see a film with Libertad Lamarque. He left without seeing it through, furious, but not furious with the film or the actress or the scriptwriter; he was furious with himself, because in some of the melodramatic scenes, his eyes had filled with tears. He was maddened by that deep-rooted reaction that you could say was almost familial or racial, and he got absolutely frantic, saying—I don't know if I can repeat his words exactly—'I can't bear that old bitch; she's such a good actress she made me cry in that absurd, grotesque, ridiculous scene!' I think his reaction against everything sexual is part of that same store of feelings.

"After *Cumbres borrascosas,* I made *Nazarín* with him."

"*Nazarín* presents some interesting problems, because it's one of his essential films and because his connection with Spanish realism and with Galdós is critical in it."

"Right. Not to mention that I had a harder time working with Buñuel on *Nazarín* than on any other film we made together—for a physical reason. His hearing was at its worse then, and that made him tremendously nervous. It drove him crazy. I remember that every day I'd go home absolutely exhausted by the effort of shouting for hours and hours. And, on top of that physical effort, I also had to calm him down, because he got really worked up when he couldn't hear, and that produced an almost violent reaction in him. But he loves the novel, precisely for the reason you just mentioned: its connection with Spanish realism. Of course, we had to change a series of things so that the novel would make sense in a Mexican setting, and that wasn't easy. At one point, the prostitutes—to give you an example—revolt against the priest, and he finds himself in the midst of people who treat him badly. We had to be careful how we dealt with that, because in Mexico, especially in the villages, the priest, the father, the little father, is treated with a degree of—how to say it?—of affection, even tenderness; that's not like Spain at all. For a prostitute to rebel against the priest and tell him off using strong language, that's something very difficult in a Mexican context. In any event—and the same thing happened with *Viridiana*—the scripts we wrote in Mexico turned out to be more Spanish than if we'd written them in Spain."

"Since you've brought up *Viridiana,* I have the impression—whether it's correct or not—that even though the plot is credited to Buñuel, it's basically a transposition of Galdós's sequel to *Nazarín*: that is, *Halma* [*Halma*]."

"Yes and no. He was very interested in shooting *Halma* at one point; Halma interested him as a character. We talked about it while we were making *Nazarín* and later on. We even went so far as to take notes and think of a few scenes that we could use for *Halma.* When we made *Viridiana*, I can't deny that that character may have influenced both of us in some way, but *Viridiana* isn't anything like *Halma.* The character in our story was formed slowly; that part was very slow. I had written a little play that had never been performed, in which a woman is shut up in a house with a man. I told Luis about it, and he was interested by the idea of a woman shut up in a house with a man. That was the point of departure for our work, and that's where the character of the novice began. We talked a lot about the character of the man, and we finally decided on a godfather. At the beginning, there was no question of a romantic relationship; we were off in another direction. Once we had the character established, we began to think that he might fall in love with his goddaughter. We decided that the man had been married to someone he loved very much and that the goddaughter resembled her. Thinking along those lines, we had the first half of the film

almost finished. But we had a real continuity problem between the first part of the film and the second; we were worried that they'd seem like two different stories united by a very tenuous connection. It's something we had to fight against."

"But did you have the second part made by then?"

"Not at all. The second part was still an unknown. Luis even thought of using the dwarf from *Nazarín*, because his acting had made such an impression. For a while, he thought that the character who wound up being played by Paco Rabal would be the dwarf. The dwarf would be somebody Viridiana would see in her imagination, like someone from a fairy tale, a beautiful, fantastic character. It was a transposition of the imagination onto the reality, a reality embellished by Viridiana. But, in spite of days and days of work, that idea led us to a series of dead ends, until finally we got onto the idea of the cousin, and of Viridiana catering to the beggars. It took us a long time to work out the second part."

"In *Nazarín* the religious issues in Buñuel's cinema come up once again. It's obvious that something has happened in that respect between *L'Âge d'or* and *Nazarín*."

"I think the religious question—an obsession, really—starts in his early childhood. The masses for children, the miracles, the liturgy, the saints. All that really appeals to him, and he has studied it in detail. The classic example is the miracle of the leg: the man from Calanda who loses his leg, and they bury it and, after it's buried, the man goes to the altar every day and puts oil on his fingers to rub the stump until the angels from heaven finally bring him his leg back. Buñuel tells the story of that miracle with a very strange, very special pride, as if to say that's the most impressive miracle in Catholic history. He's told me about that miracle fifty or sixty times. He loves that story, and when, a little while back, there was a centenary or one of those religious things, his brother sent him a series of articles from *El Heraldo de Aragón* that talked about the miracle, and the ceremonies to celebrate it, and he received all that with enormous pleasure, and he put it away in his archive and kept it, because it all fascinates him."

"So, do you believe that that Catholic background comes more from his childhood than from his education with the Jesuits?"

"I think there's a mixture of both. The business about the miracle shows that his childhood in Calanda marked him for life. But his education with the Jesuits characterizes him in a very different way. It explains his attraction to all theological things. For him, the study of things related to theology is riveting, but his time with the Jesuits also made him intransigent. I'll show you how intransigent: the first time he went back to Spain from Mexico, or maybe the second, he visited the school in Saragossa where he had studied with the Jesuits. The rector received him and showed him around the school. At the end of class, he saw that the boys were leaving in groups, horsing around, running down the stairs. This made him furious. He turned to the rector and demanded, 'What's this? When I was here, we left the classroom in a line, with our arms crossed, and we weren't allowed to talk. This is intolerable. What about discipline?'"

"I have my doubts about the effect of the Jesuits, because Luis was in that school only four years, his first four years of secondary school. After that, he studied at a public school."

"Yes, but it was enough to mark him for life. Afterward, when his mind opens up, when his curiosity leads him into other themes, that's when the Church Fathers and the Christian Year begin to interest him, and he has fun reading the lives of the saints. I was

surprised by the breadth of his knowledge when we started to write the adaptation of *Simón del desierto*."

"Okay, but don't forget that *Simón del desierto* is a film he'd been wanting to make for over thirty years. He had time to study up."

…

"You met Luis in Mexico, in his second commercial stage."

"When he started working here in Mexico, he had to go through what almost all directors do here, giving up many things and you could almost say adapting the producers' ideas. That is, they made him think about something he'd never wanted to consider before: the audience. At heart, Luis doesn't care in the least whether the audience responds to his films or not. He makes the films he wants to make, and he only thinks about the audience at the end. A few times, for example with Gustavo Alatriste, he found a producer—this had never happened before—who gave him all the resources and all the freedom to make whatever film he wanted. This freedom inhibits him in a real way, because he's aware of the responsibility of having a big sum of money in his hands and not wanting to ruin the producer. That was one of his biggest worries in *Viridiana,* one of the films where it looks as if he didn't give a fig about the audience. But Luis was very aware that the film needed to make money, even though he never abandoned his ideas. He felt that these ideas needed to take the film in a direction that would not lead to financial ruin.

"At the beginning, when he started working in Mexican film, he didn't have any choice but to adapt himself to what they gave him. He found an outlet then in jokes, in humor, in giving these films a kind of second layer or—how can I put it?—a subterranean line of jokes and humor that makes us see that he's making fun of himself. I don't think he did it for aesthetic reasons, but out of the need for personal justification. He needed to justify himself, because he was making something he didn't believe in, and so he found an escape valve in jokes and humor, and that eased his conscience a little. But the minute he could make the kind of film he wanted, he did *Nazarín.*"

"You're forgetting *Los olvidados.*"

"Okay, *Los olvidados.* To my mind, it's a thing apart in the history of Luis Buñuel. It's a kind of miracle that took place and that didn't happen again for a long time. The proof is that the film was shown here for only four or five days. Then, when it won the International Prize [actually the Jury Prize] in Europe, they put it on again, and it showed for a long, long time. I think *Los olvidados* is a kind of exception in Luis's trajectory. He did exactly what he wanted to do in it. But he did it—I *almost* would dare say—thanks to a kind of miracle, and *almost* without the producer and the people who were working with him realizing what they were doing."

"You're wrong. People don't know that both Juan Larrea and I worked on that script. And people knew what Luis had in mind. And when we worked, we also had all the documents that Alcoriza that copied. But Juan Larrea is Juan Larrea, and he gave the film a certain character that can't be erased, no matter what anybody else did. Of course, anybody who's ever worked with him knows he's as hardheaded as a good Aragonese should be."[55]

"But you're proving my point. When you throw yourself and Larrea into the mix, it's obvious that *Los olvidados* is not a run-of-the-mill film. It's strange, out of the ordinary, because afterwards there's very long pause when Luis goes back to making ordinary films, and he doesn't get to do what he really wants until *Nazarín.*"

"Agreed. That pause also has something to do with his desire to help old friends, like Ugarte and Altolaguirre."[56]

"Yes, okay. After that, when he's gotten started making the kind of films he wants, Buñuel is important in an international context as a very strong personality who suddenly says, 'Here I am, and this is what I feel, and this is what I think.' His films become universal because of their profound humanity. And from then on he only does what his conscience dictates. That independence and energy and courage to express his own ideas are what give Buñuel's cinema its quality. He never abandons his ideas. Another thing: the sediment of surrealism begins to seep away until, in his last films, its value is only decorative."

"I don't agree, at least if we're talking about early surrealism, which focuses on the idea of our inner lives, the influence of Freud and the influence of the unconscious. In spite of the distance between *Belle de Jour* or any other of his most recent films and surrealism (*Simón* is a perfect example), I believe the surrealism that impressed Buñuel when he was twenty-five or thirty years old is still essential to his films. The proof is that the films he's made recently—except for *Belle de Jour*—are more or less the films he wanted to make back then. The only one that's missing, really, is *El monje*.

"You're right, but here's the thing: when he made his first films, he gave that surrealist thinking an importance that it no longer has in his films. Now, the surrealist elements balance out with the Spanish elements."

"Well, yes, but everything in his films is Spanish."

"But it's not an ideology that's consciously activated; instead, it's a sediment of belief that surfaces naturally. Something that was primordial in him when he started his career—that is, making surrealist films—shows up in his latest films, not because he's setting out to make a surrealist film, but because it's part of him now. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

"Perfectly. I'm making a point of it, because I agree with you completely. Surrealism is now an integral part of his work whereas earlier he added more and more surrealistic elements to works that were already surrealist in themselves. That's clear in *L'Âge d'or* and *Un Chien andalou*."

"And here's something else: to my mind, Buñuel's best script (I haven't seen the last one, the one they're doing now in Paris [*La Voie Lactée*] although I've heard about it), his best script is one that hasn't been filmed yet: *Tristana*."

"I know he's been wanting to make *Tristana* for a long time, just as he's been wanting to make *El monje,* and I assume that he'll make both of them someday."

"I don't think he'll make *Tristana*. We wrote *Tristana* with Toledo in mind. So much so that some of the sequences are located in the Hospital outside the city, or on such and such a cross street, on a definite plaza, in front of a definite church, and so on, because both of us remembered Toledo very clearly, especially Luis, because he'd been there recently. So when we wrote the adaptation, we had very clear locations in mind. Those places aren't casual references, but the heart and soul of the script. The city marks the script in such a way that it would be very, very hard to set it anywhere else.

"But to shoot in Spain is going to be very hard too. First, the administration would have to authorize the film, which has been prohibited not because the script is anything like *Viridiana,* but because what happened with *Viridiana* has led the authorities to turn down *Tristana* without even reading the script. I'm totally convinced that the Spanish censors who turned down the film didn't read the script. Then, even if the film were authorized,

we'd have to get permission to shoot in Toledo, and Buñuel would have to find an actress that he liked. Even if all that came together, this is a script we wrote a few years ago, and it's possible he wouldn't like it now. This is an odd thing, but with the most of his films, if he sees them five or six years later, he doesn't like them at all.

"When Luis films, he edits on the set. He's so precise. He's worked out the script so exactly that he knows exactly where he's going to cut each scene, and he never ever films anything extra—to such an extent that during the editing—and he's always present for it—the editors are astounded by the small amount of film he needs to shoot a story."

We pause. We have a coffee. We talk about other things. Then we return to Buñuel.

[They speculate over whether Buñuel, being from Aragón, might have Jewish blood. Then Julio Alejandro mentions how Buñuel appropriates credit for a film. Aub comments on the point when the interview is over.]

There's a moment when something that's been done in collaboration with him becomes his alone. For example, he'll say, "I saw some Frenchmen in San José Purúa. Alatriste went too. I gave them a thing I didn't like anymore, something we'd worked on together." It doesn't occur to him to tell Julio Alejandro, "Here's your part." The idea of sharing that money with his collaborator just doesn't cross his mind. On the other hand, a film that Luis Alcoriza just made turns out to be "Alcoriza's and mine." But Alcoriza himself, when Buñuel backed out of the project, didn't include Buñuel's name in the credits. He signed it himself. That's the way film people are. I don't know why Julio is surprised.

…

Carlos Velo

Velo, a film producer and prize-winning director—primarily of documentaries—was an important part of the community of Spanish exiles in Mexico.

[They talk about some of Buñuel's jokes.]

Aub comments, "Luis says that the Spanish sense of humor is very peculiar and that other people don't get it,"

"I totally agree. You've probably had the experience of telling a joke at someone's expense—that kind of Spanish joke that's told very seriously—and had the other person get offended and upset, no? If you're with a Spaniard who's a friend of yours he'll die laughing and tell you an even worse joke."

"Did you make *Nazarín* with Buñuel?"

"I did. I'm in the credits as a production representative, because they couldn't give me a union credit. There's a story about it, of course. One day Sadoul and Buñuel were watching *Nazarín*. I was sitting right behind them, but they didn't realize it. You know how Sadoul takes note of everything. I heard him say, '*Hombre*, there's Carlos Velo, the guy who made *Torero* [*Toreador*].' And Buñuel, who didn't know I was right behind them, said, 'Well, yeah, he's there in the credits, but he didn't have anything to do with *Nazarín*.' I'm telling you this, because it shows what he's like, no?"

"That's what he's like. He absorbs so much of his work that all of it becomes him, or the other way around."

"So then I said, 'Well, I did have a little to do with it, no? I gave you some help." Buñuel shot back, 'Well, yes, but what I meant is that's a production credit. There's no connection with what you did."

"Something very like that happened to Alcoriza."

"I'll tell you something else about *Nazarín.* It's a Buñuel thing that really impressed me. When we were making the adaptation—I was representing [the producer] Barbachano—he told Buñuel, 'I don't know about this scene. I know you'll do what you want, but….' Because that was in the *Nazarín* contract. At that moment, Buñuel was having a hard time with his work in Mexico, and Manolo Barbachano, who had some very good qualities, suddenly said, 'What we have to do is to let this man make the film he wants even if we can't use it afterwards, but we'll let him do what he wants and not tell him we want this kind of script or that it has to end this way or that way.' But Buñuel did listen to advice, right? He was working with Julio Alejandro, as you know, because Barbachano couldn't bear Alcoriza. I never found out why. Alcoriza thinks it's my fault, but I was never involved. So, Amérigo" [executive producer on the film] "and I made a few comments on the script, thinking Buñuel would get mad, but he was very reasonable. However, at a certain point, I realized that he never talked about Galdós. And Galdós, for me, is a kind of idol."

"And for him, too."

"Okay. For him, too, but he never mentioned Galdós. When it came time to draw up the list of credits, Galdós wasn't there. I said, 'This cannot be.' 'Okay,' he said, 'but this is very personal; it doesn't have anything to do with Galdós.' 'What do you mean it has nothing to do with Galdós?' So he gave him a credit, in very small letters. It was pure jealousy. He was jealous, tremendously jealous, of Galdós. That made a huge impression on me."

"The same thing happened in *Viridiana.*"

"Not many people know about it. *Viridiana* is a sequel to *Nazarín* with the Marchioness of Halma and the castle and all the beggars, but Buñuel doesn't see it that way, and Galdós's name doesn't appear anywhere in the credits. He loves Galdós, but he takes such pride in his own creativity—and he is a great creator—that he refuses to see where many of his ideas have come from. That bothers me. I think it's the only defect I see in Buñuel. Why should he care if it comes from Galdós, whom he loves and admires. He's always studying Galdós and using his novels for films, and he's planning to make *Ángel Guerra* and planning to do this and that, all from Galdós, no? So why should he care?[57]

"And now he's going to make *Tristana.*"

"See? You can be sure that he'll grant it a 'Benito Pérez Galdós' in tiny, little letters. You'll see."

"Julio Alejandro says that it's the best adaptation they've ever made, but that they have to shoot it in Toledo."

"Yes. I've read it. Julio Alejandro gave it to me. It's very good, very good. They couldn't shoot it here. I don't know why, but they couldn't."

"Well, Luis says that now he can do pretty much what he wants, but he seems nervous, and he doesn't really want to go back to Europe to make films."

"But he's planning to go to London."

"Yes, he can go wherever he wants, but he's not doing it. He's in his doctors' hands. They're giving him all sorts of tests. He must have something, but he won't say what. Today at six-thirty, he's going to the doctor."

"I'd like to think he's just neurotic with this thing about his illnesses, that he's a lot healthier than he realizes. Apart from the Menière's Syndrome, which is terrifying. That really is a mysterious illness. I wish that all these problems were like his hearing. I think he's healthy, but easily alarmed. Did you know that my first contact with him was at the Museum of Natural Sciences. It's interesting."

"Here or in Madrid?"

"Madrid. I went as a boy to study medicine in Madrid, but preferred biology. My father was a village doctor. Behind his back, I started studying biology and the other natural sciences. This brought me into contact with the people at the Residencia de Estudiantes, but I won't tell you anything about that, because you'll know more than I do. At the Residencia, they told me about a group from there who had gotten away to Paris. They had already gone. It was Buñuel, Dalí and I don't know who else."

"Vicens."

"Vicens, yes. The Residents talked about them as if they were extraordinary guys, about the mischief they got into, how they got out late at night in spite of all the efforts made by the director of the Residencia, Alberto Jiménez. They were determined to go their own way, keep their own schedule, eat when they felt like it, ignore those things that were almost sacred to the spirit of the institution. I heard Cándido Bolívar, a young professor who was my mentor, talk about Buñuel. One day when I was in the laboratory, a professor of histology—Maynard, I don't remember his first name—who was there said to me, 'Señor Velo, since you like entomology, I hope you can help me with an important commitment. I have to send some ants to Paris.' That's what I particularly liked, social insects; it was my specialty. Bees, ants, termites all of them. I had an artificial anthill, a transparent anthill, at the museum. It had attracted a lot of attention and even gotten me a grant. I didn't know Buñuel then. I'd heard different people, including my girlfriends from the women's Residencia, talk about him, but I'd never met him. Anyway, Maynard said, 'I have to send some ants. How can you send living ants to Paris?' I said, 'But, what kind of ants?' 'The red ant from the Guadarrama, la *Formica rufa*.' I knew a lot about them. I'd been studying them. I said, 'But that's absurd! This kind of ant is in the Landes in France, in the area around Paris, in the Bois de Boulogne'—I knew all about them. 'Even if they say that ours are a variety, they're wrong.' I was against people who were sticklers for the rules. 'No, no, the one who's asking for them is Luis Buñuel.' So I went up to the Sierra de Guadarrama to collect the ants. I put them into a special box and put that into a bag to keep in the humidity with the pine needles from the Guadarrama. I handed them over to Maynard so that he could send them to Luis Buñuel. I didn't know what they were for. Those ants are famous today throughout the world; they're the ants we see in *Un Chien andalou*. I told Buñuel about it later on, and he was really amused. My first connection with Buñuel was sending him some ants, finding some ants for Buñuel. At that time, I wasn't a filmmaker. I became a filmmaker after, because of the bees. I've told the story many times about photographing the queen bee. I bought a camera, and I started taking pictures. From there, I started making documentaries."

[He talks about becoming a student leader and ascending to a "spectacular position" as the head of FUE (Spanish University Federation, a nation-wide group that opposed the dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera) and founding the Cine-Club FUE based on the Filmófono club that Buñuel ran for Ricardo Urgoiti.]

"We showed the films at the Palacio de la Prensa theater, which was owned by Urgoiti. I met Buñuel when he presented *L'Âge d'or.* There were guards at the theater. The viewing room was a small space that you used an elevator to get to. One of the FUE members said, 'There are policemen here; there are policemen here inside the theater. What are we going to do?' 'Well, we're going to show the film, and if there are policemen inside, they can watch it.' And then Buñuel came. He was very young back then, of course, almost like his photo, and very handsome. He was handsome; his hair was carefully combed. He looked like one of those tough guys you see in Madrid. He came with the reels of film under his overcoat; he brought them himself. I took hold of the reels and carried them up to the projection room. It made a big impression on me. I was cocky then, a fighter, and I didn't care about the police. Buñuel disappeared; I don't know where. I don't even know if he stayed for the session, because they started showing the film, and the first thing you see is a scorpion. The same anthropoid I'd been studying, because I was very interested in Fabre and all that. A scorpion appears. That's the beginning of *L'Âge d'or.* I said to myself, 'That Buñuel!' I tried to find him afterwards, but I lost sight of him. Then things came up … the war….

"I got stuck on the Franco side. Mantilla put the last touches on my documentary on Galicia and took it to Paris.[58] You were involved in that. Buñuel always tells me now, 'I gave you the first prize of your life, eh? The first one you ever got came from me.' He always repeats that joke, because of the documentary on Galicia. He was on the jury of the Paris International Exhibition, like you—you know all about that; I'm just mentioning it to make the connection.

"Ah! I did see Buñuel before that, in a very odd phase of his career. Mantilla and I had a contract with Warner Brothers' to make *Castillos en Castilla: El Escorial* [Castles in Castile], a series of documentaries that you must have seen. We were in Madrid at the CEA Studios. Buñuel and Ugarte were there clowning around. That's when I first glimpsed Buñuel's sense of humor—he was just acting crazy, saying he was a producer, saying he wasn't directing the pictures, saying it was all a waste of time. He had these conversations with Mantilla, who was a journalist, as well as a filmmaker. Well, he had a radio program. He talked to Buñuel to get information he could use later on his program. His reviews were famous because he was a critic with a good bit of authority at the time. He promoted Russian film; he introduced it in Spain and did wonderful work in Madrid. Anyway, Mantilla and I were filming effects for the shorts in *El Escorial.* We were dealing with the skulls that you'd supposedly find in the tombs when Buñuel came. He said, 'That's prettier and more interesting than anything that I'm doing.' Because they were shooting … *Quintin* and other things. They made terrific story choices, but the films were very badly executed. Buñuel didn't really do them. His attitude was mysterious. He was in charge of production, an executive producer, not a director. And he didn't worry about the quality of the films, a filmmaker like him! It was incredible, no? It upset me. I kept asking myself, 'Why doesn't he direct them himself? Even if it's … *Don Quintín, el amargao.* It's a wonderful farce, no? Why doesn't he do it?' And they made awful films. There are four of them."[59]

"Sadoul says in his biographies of Buñuel, 'And Buñuel intervened in a series of films that we are not going to discuss.' But let's clarify something: Did Buñuel direct them or not?"

"No. He was there behind the scene. He gave his opinion, but he didn't direct. He may have had to finish one or two of them."

…

"Time went by, and I didn't see Buñuel again until here, in Mexico."

"I'm very interested in hearing what you can tell me about the possible producer of *Ilegible, hijo de flauta.* Why wasn't the film made?"

"Here's the story. There was a big upset with *Nazarín,* which you surely know about. It was mysterious to me, and unfathomable to Manuel Barbachano. Barbachano went to Cannes with the film. He invited Luis, but at that time Luis was caught up filming that picture he made with Walerstein, which was…. *La Fièvre monte à el Pao*. Anyway, he was in the middle of filming, so it wasn't because he didn't want to go, but Barbachano was on his own at the festival, with *Nazarín,* and he had no connections there and nobody to introduce him. You know how essential that is at festivals, right? So he had a hard time. In spite of that, he still won the prize. Buñuel's absence really didn't matter, because the film spoke for itself. It was extraordinary. And when Barbachano called to let me know, he said, 'Where's Buñuel? Tell him that they're going to give us the Palme d'Or or something like it.' So I spoke to Buñuel in Acapulco, where he was filming, and he answered in monosyllables, because he was involved in the shoot. It didn't seem to me…."

"He doesn't care about prizes."

"He doesn't care at all. He told me, 'Great, very good, *hombre*. Well, that's great! That's fabulous!' Afterwards, by the way, I launched a tremendous publicity campaign for the film. I arranged the premiere, and the film actually made money. And after that, when he spoke to me on the phone, he'd always say, 'I'm a commercial director now! I'm a lost cause! What are they saying about my film? That it's the story of Jesus Christ? How can that be?' 'Well, yes, exactly. They're saying it's the story of the Passion of Christ. You're a commercial director. You've made another *King of Kings*.'[60] And he'd laugh and say, 'If my films start making money now, that'll be the end of my prestige as a director, and that would be terrible.' But Manolo didn't get so much as a telegram from Luis. He had told Luis to make whatever he wanted to, and they'd won the prize, but Manuel Barbachano didn't even get a telegram from him. It just made him sick. Amérigo and I had a hard time explaining that Spanish character to him, that sense of austerity, that belief that the works didn't matter, along with the dryness and the lack of cordiality. I even explained the theory about the deserts of Aragón, about the great deaf men produced by that land, those deserts, those salt flats: Cajal, Costa, Buñuel.[61] All deaf and all brilliant, brilliant monsters! Not to mention Goya! Our insistence finally got through to Manolo, and he suggested to Buñuel, 'Let's make another film, anything you like.' But there was still a certain resentment. So Buñuel said, 'Well, I'd like to do something very daring. I have these stories….' He proposed making a film based on some mysteries that he and Alcoriza had written and that had never been filmed. All the stories took place in Paris. People would disappear even though they were still present. It's the only omnibus film I've ever heard Buñuel suggest. There would be three stories. Around then, he also told me, 'Let's make a film, you and I.' I was very touched at the thought of it. 'About what?' 'About bugs. You know all about them.' I was enthusiastic about the project until he told me how he saw it, and then I was shocked: the idea was to show human relationships interpreted by insects. He's surely told you about it."

"He hasn't told me a thing, but I've seen references."

"To the insects? Anyway, the film was never made, for obvious reasons. We didn't know what to do, and then the possibility of *Ilegible* came up. The script arrives, and Manolo says, 'This is madness. It's not commercial or even near. But we'll do it, because it's an art-

house film, it's a very strange thing. It's a Buñuel film. It'll sell in Europe. We'll do it.' But the end of the film, which shows the destruction of New York … [would have to be changed]."

[Buñuel agrees to change the ending, but only if Larrea authorizes it. Larrea tells the story at greater length in his interview in this book.]

"And it was never made [Aub says]; that's a real shame."

"Especially since he knows how to promote a film better than anybody."

"He doesn't even bother."

"Maybe, but Luis Buñuel has worked out a whole pragmatics that you could call 'how to take a director's public relations to such a level that they completely disconcert the run-of-the-mill, pseudo-intellectual journalists and everybody associated with them.' After listening to him for a long time, I've realized that he's developed a few articles of faith. One of them is the absolute denial that his films can be interpreted. This insistence is profoundly surrealist, of course. It's a style and a school. Anyone unfamiliar with that movement is totally surprised: 'Are you saying your film doesn't mean anything?' 'My film means whatever you want it to mean.' That's his number one principle: 'What you think when you see it is what my film means.' In other words, an open interpretation of art, no? Not an art that follows rules, but an art solely intended to produce a reaction in someone. Now, his second principle is: 'Does my film bother you? Does it deeply offend you? That's wonderful! That's exactly what I wanted!' That's surrealist too. It's not intended to *épater le bourgeois* [surprise the bourgeois], no. It's to attack him; it's an assault so that those pathetic creatures will wake up, right? Buñuel has handled those two items wonderfully. 'I don't know what my film means.' 'I don't know either.' 'I don't care.' 'Fine, but you really meant….' 'I didn't mean anything. You're the one who's giving it a meaning.' This is now an international school, because nowadays directors from Italy and from all over the world say this sort of thing. I myself, and only modestly—being a small-time director—have used it when I was in Europe. When you feel hemmed in: 'I didn't mean anything.' You do it as a defense. It's a stupendous Buñuelian practice that should be studied. Another practice is the one that relates to prizes: 'I've won a prize? I don't care. I didn't send my film to the competition; the producer must have sent it, or it just got there on its own.' Sometimes it seems like a joke; other times, it's understood as false modesty, but it's actually a philosophical activity. The thing is: he knows about judges, about prizes and about the mechanism behind the prizes. He knows it's all profoundly amoral and profoundly bourgeois and profoundly wrong, no? So Buñuel's approach is stupendous. There are three or four stupendous things like that, things he does, that are norms now."

* * *

"When he came back from making *Viridiana* he came to see us."

"He had been in Galicia for the first time."

"Yes, and he came to see me, because in our dinners with Amérigo and everybody, Galicia always came up. I'd start to talk about Galicia, to tell stories, and so on. And he'd say, 'These Galicians are fantastic! The Andalusians can't compare to them. The way they talk about home; it's incredible!' It really impressed him. I used to tell him, 'You'll get to Galicia.' And, in fact, when he came back from shooting *Viridiana,* he called me. I think we went to his house. We ate shrimp and I don't know what else. And he told me, 'I called

you, because, first of all, I want to subscribe to the Galician magazine you produce, so that I can learn Galician,[62] and, second, to tell you that I never understood the *saudade* [nostalgia] or the other problems you-all have. Now I've seen Galicia, and I was impressed.' 'Good, but impressed by what?' 'It wasn't the countryside or the cities that impressed me; it was Santiago de Compostela. The atmosphere impressed me. It was something I'd always imagined, but didn't believe it really existed.' Then he said, 'Okay, look: none of that matters. What really matters is that Galicia is the birthplace of the greatest, most important heretic of all, the one who challenged Rome by the book: Priscillian.' Of course, he knew about him because he has all those books by…."

"Not to mention Larrea."

"Larrea, yes, and the books by Menéndez Pelayo,[63] and he also knows that Spanish politician—I can't remember his name—a friend of Casares Quiroga, the man who wrote the only book there is about Priscillian. I gave Buñuel the details about the book. 'This is really interesting,' he told me 'This is extremely interesting. One day'—that happened a few years ago—'One day I'm going to make a film about Priscillian.' I was touched to the heart when I saw later on that he really had made the film [*La Voie Lactée*]."

…

* * *

"One day I told him," Velo continues, "'Luis, I have a perfect explanation about the story line, the romantic, bourgeois and totally accessible story of *Un Chien andalou.*' 'Oh, great, I'd be really interested to hear it.' So, together with Carlos Fuentes, Federico Amérigo, Manolo Barbachano and I don't know how many others, I projected *Un Chien andalou,* at the same time providing a running commentary on the film as a love story, a man with an inner conflict and an ending right out of a sentimental novel. You can't imagine Buñuel's indignation. So I told him, 'Look, ever since my student days, ever since I first became a filmmaker, like every other filmmaker in the world, I've driven myself crazy trying to decipher *Un Chien andalou.* What's it about, what's the theme, what's inside it, what's it mean for us.' 'It doesn't mean anything.' 'I know, I know, but after making a huge effort, over years and years, I reached the conclusion that the story's perfectly clear.' He says, 'No, that's impossible, incredible, intolerable; I can't put up with that.' Amérigo and the others were about to die laughing. They told me time and time again that I had to write it up, but I never did. That *Un Chien andalou* told the perfectly straightforward story of a boy who remembers his childhood, who struggles with his inner urges—should I follow my good angel or my bad angel? He meets a girl; he fights with her—right?—and then they walk along a beach together in a happy ending. It's wonderful, because at last the boy experiences love and the encounter he has longed for. That drove Buñuel crazy. He said, 'To think: nobody's ever been able to explain *Un Chien andalou,* and it had to be Galician who came and did it.'"

* * *

"This piece of information is very delicate, documented, not gossip, okay?"[64]

"Of course," [responds Aub].

"Okay, one day this person told me—we were speaking about Buñuel, and I was expressing my admiration, saying Buñuel is a monument, a rock, and so on—so he told

me, 'Fine, but you know that Luis Buñuel is a man with odd tastes.' I said, 'I'm not interested; I don't believe it.' I didn't want to hear that kind of thing, right? And this person started telling me that a suspicious character left his house every day, that he gave señor Buñuel a massage every day, at a point when he was in Mexico for two years. In short, he told me that Buñuel used to go to a masseur and that this masseur was a shady type. I said, well that could be a fabrication, a…."

"He has a problem with his vertebrae."

"Yes, I have to get massages too. I mean it."

"And he sleeps on the floor."

"Oh, I know about that. He sleeps on a plank on the floor. He's shown it to me. Anyway, from that piece of information, this person came up with a taste for strange relations, and that shocked me. I never dared to say anything to Luis about it."

"I would."

"Anyway, now nothing shocks me, and I don't care if he is or not, whether he's pansexual or whatever doesn't matter, right? It even fits with his personality. It doesn't bother me. However, speaking as a Spaniard, my own take is that he's the kind of Spaniard who's square—right?—closed-minded and a complete Puritan. That's how I see Buñuel."

"Me too. I don't see any kind of deviance there."

Ricardo Muñoz Suay

Muñoz Suay, as we've seen, was in his youth the leader of the Federación Universitaria Española and a communist activist; he would never drop his political affiliation, but was later involved in the film world. Although they barely knew each other as young people, he and Buñuel would become good friends later in life.

"People say that because he's Aragonese Buñuel tells the truth even if it hurts. I think that if we can make racial distinctions based on geography, then Luis's antecedents are closer to Galicia [known for its tricksters and liars] than to Aragón. I met Luis in September of 1936. Pepe Bergamín and Eugenio Imaz had come to Valencia to fetch me. I was about seventeen or eighteen, a leader of the FUE. We were going to an International Conference of Intellectuals, or Students—I don't remember exactly—at the Society of Nations in Geneva. When the train was traveling between Barcelona and the frontier, Pepe Bergamín and I—Imaz wasn't feeling well—went to the restaurant car. And there was Luis Buñuel. Bergamín introduced us. I only knew Luis Buñuel through photographs, but because of my sectarian education, I couldn't see much of interest in surrealism. Still my enthusiasm about film meant that I was interested in everything Buñuel had to say on that subject. We were in the restaurant car, eating or drinking something, when at a certain point—this has always been strangely related in my mind to the story of Marie Antoinette's necklace—at a certain point, an argument broke out. I think I'm remembering this correctly. Luis took a necklace out of his pocket and told me—I was much younger than he was—'This is from a countess, a marchioness, a bourgeoise, a capitalist that I robbed or that I murdered in Madrid.' Right? Since I wasn't familiar then—two years later I would be—with Luis's jokes nor with the kind of jokes the surrealists told, I won't exactly say I believed him, but I was left wondering

if it was true or a lie. He said, 'I'm going to Paris now. I don't have any money, and I need to sell this necklace. Do you want to buy it?' Pepe Bergamín said No, he didn't have any money either, but I didn't even say that much. I was shaken. The trip went on with us talking about I don't remember what. At the frontier, we had some trouble, because guards who were controlling the frontier at that time—either FAI [International Federation of Anarchists] or CNT—gave us a hassle over our diplomatic passports. Luis crossed right over; he told us later that he had to let out an oath—'I shit on God'—that took the guards by surprise so they let him pass. He was probably lying, but for whatever reason they did let him by.

"Luis was going to Paris, and we headed off to Geneva on a different train, where we ran into Conchita and Isabel García Lorca. They told us that Federico was fine in Granada, that nobody was talking about him, that everything was okay. I remember we met them right after saying good-bye to Luis. When I think of Luis Buñuel, I always picture him with those bulging eyes, thyroid eyes. I remember him as a young man. I'm not sure if I'm remembering him from that time, or remembering a photograph I saw later. He made a big impression on me with the story about that necklace he pulled out of his pocket.

"Years went by, and in January of 1959, I went to Mexico. The first or second day I was in Mexico, Barbachano invited us to dinner at his house, and there was Luis Buñuel. We introduced ourselves. I said, 'I'm sure you don't remember me.' 'Of course I do. You're Muñoz Suay.' 'Yes, but you don't remember me. You know who Muñoz Suay is now, because I write, because I'm involved in film, but I traveled with you in September of 1936 and with Pepe Bergamín.' 'Ah, you're that young student.' 'Yes, that was me. Do you remember?' 'Of course I remember you. We ate in the restaurant car. Then we crossed the frontier. Remember, they didn't let the others by?' 'Exactly.' Then I said, 'By the way, Luis, I remember that at a certain point you took out a necklace and you told me that it had belonged to a countess or a marchioness that you had murdered or robbed in Madrid.' He got indignant, furious, red in the face, 'That's a lie. That's something you've made up. I've never done anything like that,' and so on. We sat down to dinner, and halfway through the meal, Luis got up, came over to me and said, 'Listen, Ricardo, what you said is true. But there's a difference: it wasn't a necklace, it was the chain from my father's watch. I always travel with it, and I used it to play a trick on you. You'll see. Come to my house, and I'll show you the chain.' Afterwards, I consulted his sisters, and they said that yes, he has that chain and he travels with it and so on. But I've always wondered if it was his father's watch chain and part of a surrealist joke, or if it was really a necklace that he was carrying so he could raise a few pesetas and get to Paris. I saw him later in Paris, in the middle of the war in that section of the Republican Embassy—now I can't remember what it was called. In the Hotel Georges V? I ran into him once or twice there, and I didn't run into him again until after the war, in 1959 in Mexico."

[They talk a little about how Muñoz Suay overlapped with Aub and Buñuel in Paris during the war, but—being much younger—did not see much of them. Aub asks whether Luis told him anything about his work in Paris at that time.]

"No. As far as I remember, he told me nothing. In his filmography, there's a montage film on the Spanish war that he says was made on behalf of the Republican government and put together in Paris. But that film doesn't figure in his filmography from back then nor in the filmography that he gave me personally. It's called something like "The Spanish

War" [see 270*n*111]. He's never talked to me about it. It's a dark hole. We're talking about those more or less unknown aspects of Luis's work in Paris. Years later, in Mexico or maybe when he was shooting *Viridiana* in '61, Luis told me of his disgust with all those people in the war on the Republican side who were criminals, who had taken advantage of the situation to commit crimes, and so on. At one point, he told me that when he was at the embassy, he sent a telegram, signed with a pseudonym, to the authorities in the Canary Islands, telling them that on such and such a foreign boat, they would find García Atadell, who had escaped from Spain and was seeking refuge in America, and that those authorities—acting for Franco—had, in fact, arrested García Atadell and sentenced him."

"Don't forget that the readers won't know who García Atadell is."

"I always link him in my mind with Ramón J. Sender, because both of them belonged to the Dawn Brigade, right?"

"You're wrong, but it doesn't matter."

"Sender wasn't part of the Dawn Brigade?"

"No. His story is different. Sender belonged to the Communist Party then."

"The other belonged to the CNT, didn't he? García Atadell was either CNT or FAI. Both groups relied on "dawn brigades" that took justice in their own hands and committed many crimes in the early months of the war until the authorities, Negrín and the others, took control of the situation."

…

[What follows is a series of diary entries, made by Muñoz Suay, involving Buñuel.]

"Buñuel tells me at one point, 'I've made *El ángel exterminador* without any program, irrationally.' On another day, August 18, 1965, he explains that he's written Alatriste to say that if he—Alatriste—does not send *Simón de desierto* to the festival in Venice, he—Buñuel—will promise to finish it." [For the ending, see the interview with Allanegui.]

Memories of Friday, 17 June 1966: At eight o'clock, with the punctuality he demands, Nieves [Muñoz Suay's wife] and I show up at his apartment in the Torre de Madrid, where he has stayed consistently since his first return trip to Spain. His sister Conchita opens the door, and Luis tells me that a thousand swords of Damocles are threatening him, he doesn't know what will happen, but they are hanging over his liver, his heart and his head. He greets Nieves as if she were a little girl, and he asks her about her mother. He tells me that, with my sport coat, I look like a hairdresser. He laughs, and we drink a 'buñueloni,' a kind of negroni.

Right away, he tells me that he's seen the best Spanish film, not just the best, the only, Spanish film. I know he's talking about *La caza* [*The Hunt* by Carlos Saura]. He says, "The two films that have made the greatest impression on me are *Battleship Potemkin* and *La caza*. But if you walk out of *Potemkin* feeling like you want to start a revolution and kill the bourgeoisie"—he laughs—"after *La caza,* you're just destroyed. People are not going to like that level of cruelty. It's the cruelest film I know. But everybody is going to talk about it: the critics and so on. It's extraordinary. I supported *Los golfos* [*The Delincuents*]. That's when I made friends with Saura. I'm sure his second film is bad, but *La caza* is amazing. It left me absolutely wrecked. The cruelty in it! It's really well made, but even if it were badly made, that wouldn't matter. It's a great film. It will be the end of all those infamous Spanish films."

I ask if he's received many offers. "Lots, lots, much more than ever." "From here in

Spain?" "No, from all over the world, lots of them. I'm writing by myself now. Next week Carrière Is coming to write a screenplay based on a novel by Joseph Kessel. I have to finish the film by the end of March. I shoot in Paris, starting in September and ending in December, and then I'll go back to Mexico. Later, maybe next year, I'll shoot *El monje.*

[Buñuel talks about the fun he's having writing the screenplay for *Belle de Jour* (even though he does not like Kessel's work), about how much he has been drinking, about his visit to Chicote, a famous bar he used to frequent in the 1930s.]

I give him a clipping from yesterday's *ABC*: a blind father stabs his son. I always save news clippings about blind men for him. He remembers that last year I gave him a piece of news that really tickled him. It was about a football match between two teams of blind men, in—I think—Valladolid.

17 September 1969: [They talk about their good friends in Mexico. Buñuel does not want to talk about politics any more. Since all politicians seem disposed to use the atomic bomb should the need arise, how can you trust any of them. Surrealism is what really matters. They go out to a French restaurant, and then to the Plaza Mayor, which—now that it's cleaned up and illuminated—looks like a museum to Buñuel. They are looking for "ojén," an anise liqueur, but have to settle for Chinchón, a different—more commercial—anise liqueur. On the way back to the Torre, Buñuel comments that they are a little drunk.]

As we go by the Calle de las Hileras, he remembers that at number 4 there used to be a brothel where he used…. He tells me that long ago, at this time of year, Federico García Lorca and he went to the Verbena de San Antonio and that they got drunk. He tried to take Federico to a brothel, but it was very late, and the guard wouldn't let them in. "Did you know?" he says, "Federico was a pederast." Since they weren't allowed in, they urinated on the door of the building. "That was the day of the photo in the plane. On the back of it, Federico wrote me a poem. I have several of his unpublished poems."[65]

For some reason, I bring up Benlliure's son.[66] "I knew him," he tells me. We organized the queer hunt with him. There was a *pissoir*, the kind where you can see people's feet from outside, on the Calle de Lista. Is it still there? Benlliure and our other friends waited for me on a stone bench on the promenade. I would go into the pissoir when somebody went in so I could look at him. I pretended that I wanted to watch him urinate, and I gave him certain looks. If the guy who was urinating paid attention to me, I'd take a handkerchief out of my pocket when I walked out. That was the sign for Benlliure and the others to pounce on him and give him a good beating." He laughs out loud.

[They continue on their way to the Torre, talking about the famous crucifix/knife in *Viridiana,* an item discovered by Domingo Dominguín, one of the Spanish producers of *Viridiana*, in the city of Albacete. Apparently, after the furor it caused in the film, the ecclesiastical authorities forbid its manufacture.]

21 June 1966: [Buñuel puts off a dinner at Muñoz Suay's house, but comes by later and confesses that he's worried because he hasn't heard from his younger son Rafael, who's traveling by motorcycle from Germany to Athens. They talk about their children. Muñoz Suay accuses him of being hard on his, and Buñuel qualifies his treatment as "rigorous."] He says that a few days ago a short made by the older son, Juan Luis, was shown in Paris. The short is about the drumming ceremony that takes place in Calanda every year on Good Friday. Juan Luis called his father to say the audience laughed uproariously as if they were at a Chaplin film and that he was so confused by the reaction, he asked a Spanish

exile, a man from the next town, why people were laughing. "Because it's bestial—they're like animals."

Luis talks about the drums again, and I remember when he took out a drum in Mexico in 1959 and started playing it. Later, listening to the record some friends had made in Calanda and sent him, he burst into tears. Today he started to drum on the table when we were eating dinner. He says that he's gone to hear the drumming since he was two years old and that he went last year and played for three hours. They play non-stop for twenty-four hours, until their hands bleed and cover the drums with blood. He says, very proudly, that it's not military, not marching music, that you can't march to the music of Calanda, because the rhythms are very primitive. He says there's a proclamation with a rhythm similar to Falla's *Retablo*—he imitates it—and that the speaker, who follows the oral tradition, since nothing is written, used to shout, "And then the damned Jews…" and so on, but now they've gotten rid of the "damned" part, and he just says "the Jews."

[More chit-chat. At one point, Buñuel says, "My head is very complicated, very dishonest, but in my actual dealings, I'm very pure." Later, speaking about friends in Mexico, he says that the communists and their fellow-travelers are "very good people, very sentimental." He uses Mantecón as an example, because Mantecón wore a black tie to the funeral of his sister even though he disliked her. "As to me," he says, "if my sons or my wife dies, I'd be terribly sad. I'd be destroyed, but I'd never put on a black tie. If I do, it's because I'm gaga."

They talk about film, about the image of a laughing Christ and Buñuel's desire to make a film showing a very human Christ. "If a wasp stings him," asks Muñoz Suay, "what should he say? 'I shit on God?'" Buñuel laughs and says, "No, he'd say, 'Oh, dear!'" Luis gives more details about *Belle de Jour* and comments that the brothel in the film, even though it's set in Paris, is actually based on the brothels he used to visit in Madrid as a young man. He refers to Henry Miller's long piece on *L'Âge d'or* and says that Miller used to telephone him from his job at the American Express in Paris.]

Dinner, 30 July 1966: [Buñuel and his sister Conchita come to dinner.] "He puts in his hearing aid immediately, and I ask him, as a joke, 'Have you put in your false teeth too?' He laughs and says, 'Everything is false, even this' (he carefully turns his back on the women and points at his fly)." [They chat about various things. When Muñoz Suay asks who will play the role of Séverine in *Belle de Jour,* Buñuel tells him Catherine Deneuve, explaining that Jeanne showed him a photograph of her in a fashion magazine, and he thought she'd be fine, but that he hasn't seen any of her films. He's pleased with the way the film script has turned out, especially the confusion between Séverine's masochistic fantasies, her memories and the actual life she lives. He's not sure if he'll shoot *El monje.* If he does, he won't start until March. Muñoz Suay asks why he doesn't stay on in Spain.] "Because I have my monastery in Mexico: my things, my books, my arms, etc."

25 January 1967: I received a telegram from Buñuel, from the Torre, inviting us to supper today. He's fine, but he seems older. He says he doesn't want to direct any more. Tomorrow he'll go back to Paris to take care of the mix on his last film [*Belle*]. He says he's so deaf now that he doesn't even hear when the actors make a mistake. That he's tired and can live on the money he has. That he'll go back to Mexico to live, to die. He'll come to Madrid from time to time, but has no desire to change houses. "I could live much longer, but I could also die at any minute. What if I'm changing houses, bringing everything here, and I have a heart attack and die in the middle of the move."

He talks about his latest film. He says that she—I can't remember the protagonist's name [Catherine Deneuve]—is an idiot, but that she comes across well and that the other actors are very good…. He tells us that he went to Breton's funeral, but that he wore dark glasses, "like Greta Garbo." Kyrou, Benayoun, and so on were there, but none of them recognized him. He was right by the tomb, two steps away. I think he cried—that's my impression. He says the funeral was sad and cold and the turn-out was low, that he always got along with Breton and thought highly of him. He says the four greatest men of the twentieth century are: Einstein, Freud, Lenin and Breton. "Surrealism,' he adds, "is more and more important to me."

19 August 1967: Yesterday I lost the best letter Luis Buñuel has ever written to me. It was dated the eighth or ninth of August of this year. He wrote that he had received my column on him—one that came out a while back in *Fotogramas*—and that it was just so-so, because I didn't praise him enough, and flattery is always a good thing. He said he's not sure whether he'll go to Venice or not [*Belle de Jour* would compete in the festival], but that the producer, the actors, Carrière, Fuentes [on the jury] and Kiriane were urging him to go. He doesn't want to go, because he's afraid of seeing too many films, putting up with too many speeches, people, etc. He's afraid of getting sick far from his home in Mexico, of getting drunk, of eating too much. And, the worst part is: he can't bear it if the first prize goes to somebody else. He'll only agree to go if they'll guarantee it, and if he doesn't get it, he'll shit on the mother of the president of the jury. [He also says that he's written a letter to protest an interview with him that came out in *Nuestro Cine,* that, without meaning to, the interviewers—young filmmakers Muñoz Suay introduced him to—falsified his words, etc.] When he sees interviews with him come out in print, Luis always complains that they've changed his meaning, but my impression is that, in general, what they write is pretty close to what he says.

…

20 January 1969: [Conchita and Margarita Buñuel come to visit. They talk about their memories of the Civil War. They tell Muñoz Suay:] "As you know, we've seen *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* many times, and we realize that many things in it are memories of our house. The kitchen is like the one we had in Calanda, in the tower. The bit about the stove and the rats is from our house. And the woman who's obsessive about cleanliness and about her objects is our sister María, who's the only 'aristocrat' in the family. And the little boots are identical to the ones that our French governess wore. The thing about the snails is another memory. All of us used to go out to the fields after a rain with baskets so we could collect snails. We'd fill up a few baskets. Years later, one of the servants—in the country we had seven or eight servants between men, women, the governess and so on—one of the men confessed that our father had told him to take snails to the fields so that we could find them."

…

* * *

[The interview between Aub and Muñoz Suay resumes. Aub asks,]

"According to you, Luis calls the Party 'the widow.'"

"The 'widow.' It's always a kind of code. When we see each other, he asks, 'How's the widow getting along?' …

"Do you agree with me that, after the famous trip Aragon and somebody else took to the Soviet Union, Luis joined the Party, and that after that we don't know anything?"

"Exactly. The mystery of Luis and the Party. When he speaks officially, he says, 'The communists are the best of a bad lot' or 'Communism is the least offensive.' The other day, on the other hand—when we were in Venice—I was telling him that my own ideological process was leading me closer and closer to anarchism. At that, he said, 'I agree, intellectually and morally, about anarchism, but not politically, because the anarchists are like the fascists.' He always insists that communism is the best choice available. My impression, as I said before, is that he has had contacts with or has actually been a member of the French Communist Party. I don't think he ever belonged to the Spanish Party. That is, I don't think he's ever had an official relationship with the Spanish Party" (see 267*n*66).

[Aub speaks about a topic he has discussed earlier: the fear that leads Buñuel to get out of dangerous situations fast.] "He wrote to me last year after the events at Tlatelolco, the massacre of the students. He asked, 'What should we do? It's terrible.' And he writes to Juanita, forbidding her to open the door to anybody. That's not normal. Do you see any relation between his family life and Luis's terrible fear of death, mainly violent death and this in a man who loves firearms, makes his own cartridges and up until about ten years ago had no reservations about hunting?"

"You have to put yourself in his world, which I don't know all that well. Luis always says that he's not afraid of death, that what he fears is being sick, being paralyzed…. In spite of this, however, I feel—feel almost physically—when I'm with Luis that what he fears more than anything is death. One thing you've told me is that all the Buñuels are terrified of spiders. I imagine that you'll come to a conclusion in your book…. What I'd like to know is why all the Buñuels are so much like each other? There are lots of families in which the siblings don't resemble each other at all, but when I'm with one of them, I always feel there are extraordinary bonds and affinities, identical motivations that make me think they spring from their shared childhood….

"It's very strange how this man whom people see as a surrealist or an anarchist, no? a time bomb, a bomb in the world of film and of ideology too, and they always write about Buñuel the anarchist, Buñuel the wild man and so on, it's very strange that he's a man who is, at least in part—and I don't say it critically—someone who's a good bourgeois, who loves his family—even though he may hide that love behind a certain severity, and it's especially strange, going back to what we were saying earlier, that he's a man who is afraid. And I don't say that critically either. I think that the person who is afraid is great, because he's sincere. I'm afraid and unafraid in varying degrees, but I think Luis is always running away. This is a product of his religious education, a product of his family education. The truth is that, even though Buñuel's work is sincere, for me it's insincere."

"Well, now…."

"The other day, for example, Luis told me, 'Ricardo, the things we have to combat, the things that disgust me more and more, are patriotism, the family and religion.' That's not the order he put them in; it was patriotism, religion and family. As a close friend of Luis's, as a critic and somebody who studies Luis, I have a huge problem every time I see one of his films. I suppose this is what he really wants. We're both in agreement about patriotism; it's revolting. Luis, obviously, makes fun of the sense of patriotism."

"But he's more Spanish than anybody."

"Exactly, I was going to say that. He's more Spanish than anybody, and perhaps, if it weren't for personal reasons and so on, he'd like to die, as they say, on Spanish ground. He comes to Spain to eat, to drink, because he's comfortable here."

"To breath."

"Exactly. In Madrid. Of course, I know he doesn't come here to kiss the flag. He's a cultivated man and an intellectual, so the flag and all those other patriotic emblems mean nothing to him. What he comes for is the wine, the food, Madrid, his memories, a whole life. That's one thing. As far as religion goes, his films always upset me. They create a series of problems: is he a believer or not, is he Catholic or not? Personally, I don't care if he is or isn't. What I mean is that he comes across, especially in international film criticism, as an atheist, a staunch critic of the Church and so on. But, in spite of all that, there is always, always, in every film, a trace of Catholicism…. He says that he has no sense of patriotism, but patriotism for him is Madrid, Saragossa. He says that you have to fight against religion, but the great concern of all his films is religion. And finally, the family comes in, right? For people like us, who know him, know what his life is like with his wife and his sons, know how strict he can be with his boys and so on, once again, we see a paradox: there's the Luis that you and I know personally and are trying to figure out, and the official Luis, the artist or author. And, in many ways, the two are in opposition."

"There's a really violent contradiction between them. This is the fundamental problem of his life, a problem he's tried to resolve through surrealism."

"Exactly."

"And hasn't resolved at all. Because as far as surrealism goes, he's made two surrealist films—right?—that have left a considerable mark. But when he starts to work on his own [without Dalí], he makes *Tierra sin pan,* which, by the way…."

"Buñuel told me that surrealism was, first of all, a moral sense of opposition to a society they couldn't accept. Fine. Leaving aside all the other ramifications, whether they were personal, literary or intellectual, that led to the choice between Breton and Aragon, the break-up of the group, the accusations of right-wing or left-wing thinking…."

"But remember one thing: he went to Breton's funeral. I'm not sure he'd go to Aragon's even though he had closer [intellectual and political] ties to Aragon, but he has told me that he always felt much closer to Breton personally. This preference for Breton in an author who is more a communist than anything else is another contradiction. The unbridgeable gap between Bretonism and communism."

…

"We always talk about Luis's surrealism," Muñoz Suay continues. "I *do* think there are many surrealist elements in Luis, but here's the thing we've overlooked: there's really no relation between Luis's surrealism and the surrealism of Aragon, Breton and the rest of the group. The surrealist elements in Luis are autochthonous. Those indigenous elements, mixed in with his experiences in Paris, and maybe, too, with a little imitation, have produced all Luis's films. I don't think that Luis really has anything to do with French surrealism, but that it's something—I don't know what to call it—something that is part of us, part of our Spanish heritage."

"You may be right. I'm close to believing it. I've also begun to think that, apart from his first two films, surrealism is just an add-on, put in so that people won't say he's not a surrealist, a kind of screen, arranged to hide the social meaning, which is the deepest mean-

ing of all Buñuel's films from *Los olvidados* on [he's speaking in 1969]. He's taken a huge step backwards starting with *Tierra sin pan* up to whatever he makes now, depending on how *Tristana* comes out. I'd like for you to talk to me a bit about *La Voie Lactée*."

"It's in the notes I wrote in Montpellier, where Margarita Buñuel and I went to see the film on 24 April 1969, which is to say, this year. Margarita tells me the Spanish inn that appears in the film, the Posada del Llopo, is in ruins near Calanda and that Luis used to visit it…. As I see it, the film is based on the contradiction between humor and tragedy. The man who is shown in one of the beds at the inn says something like, 'Reading so much about scientific inventions, a person comes to believe in God.' The film is full of Buñuel's and his friends' memories. In the Inquisition scene, it seems he was thinking of the repression in Spain. I even think somebody told me there's a reference to a million deaths. The voice you hear from the radio of the devil's car is Buñuel, talking about Hell, and he does it in Spanish. When the young beggar asks the other one (Paul Frankeur) how old he is, the other answers sixty or something like it. The young one asks, 'And do you still…?' The old one makes the sign of the sole. It's something Domingo [Dominguín] and I invented: we imagined that every morning in the bathroom Buñuel shaved his penis as though it were a wide, flat fish. The image of Christ, walking like a normal person, is one I've seen Buñuel himself perform often. Apparently, now in Paris, they speak of 'Buñuel's next last film.' Ducay, who called to tell me he'd just been to Mexico, says that Buñuel insists that he's said all he has to say in *La Voie Lactée* and that he just wants to shoot *Tristana*…."[67]

Gustavo Alatriste

Alatriste, a successful businessman in Mexico and also a bit of a shady dealer, produced three of Buñuel's best films: Viridiana, El angel exterminador *and* Simón del desierto. *His second wife, Silvia Pinal, was the protagonist of* Viridiana *and had less important roles in the other two films. It is rumored that the idea of shooting* Viridiana *in Spain was motivated, at least in part, as a way of getting his money out of Mexico and beyond the reach of his former wife.*

"The first time I saw him was in the Kid, a restaurant, in Puebla. He was drinking at the bar, and so was I. I didn't really know who he was, but he seemed like he would be good company. I went over to talk with him, and soon we were chatting away. At that time, I was married to a person who worked in film, but she was an awful, awful actress. Maybe because of my impression of her abilities, I had a really bad impression of Mexican film. But Buñuel was very appealing, and after that conversation, I went to see…. The first film of señor Buñuel's I saw was *Ensayo de un crimen*, at the Palacio Chino. There weren't many people at the theater. It was like a wake, but a wake with a crazy person. In this case, I was the crazy person, because the only person there who laughed was me. I laughed and laughed, and the people—the few people who were there—turned around in their seats to stare at me. If you asked me why I laughed, I really couldn't tell you. What I'm saying is, Buñuel's personality just appealed to me. Some time later, we saw each other in Spain. I've always had a weakness, a weakness for women, and maybe now, for Buñuel, well, for the last eight years really. It's a strange thing. Anyway, I was in Europe with another lady, whom I hadn't married yet, but I had gotten divorced. So—in one of those sentimental moments a person

sometimes has—I asked this lady what I could do for her, what gift she would like. This lady, in my opinion, was a good actress. She said, 'The thing I'd like best of all is to make a film with señor Buñuel.' That happened in Rome, sometime in 1960. 'Fine. That's a great idea.' We went to Madrid, and Paco Rabal served as an intermediary. We arranged a meeting in May of 1960 at the Phoenix Hotel. Señor Buñuel arrived. I recognized him, because of our meeting at that restaurant I told you about, a kind of restaurant/night club. He told me he was there to make a film with Paco Rabal, something about war, by one of his favorite Spanish writers, the one who wrote *Viridiana*. What's his name?"

"Galdós."

"Galdós, Pérez Galdós. And the novel was … help me out here."

"*Tristana.*"

"No, not *Tristana,* something with the word 'war' (*guerra*) in the title."

"*Ángel Guerra.*"[68]

"*Ángel Guerra,* that's it. He's always had a very high opinion of Paco Rabal. He said, 'I don't know if conditions here are favorable for filming, but I'll stay here a few days to see what can be done.' Finally, I invited him to make a film for me, and I remember clearly that Silvia, my lady friend, Silvia Pinal, told me, 'Do everything you can for him, let him make whatever he pleases, whatever he wants' and so on. I repeated what she had said and added, 'Look, señor Buñuel, if you decide to make a film with me, you can choose the theme, the place, the situation, etc.' He was interested, and I think he asked me, 'Do you realize what you're saying?' 'I have a general idea: you'll pick the subject, and you'll have the freedom to do what you want.' He might have thought that it was just a grand gesture to show off in front of my lady friend. He said he'd think about it and that in ten or fifteen days he would write or send me a telegram. I had to go back to Mexico. We went back to Mexico, and about fifteen or twenty days later, I received telegram sent from the ship he was returning on. In the telegram, he said that he'd accept my proposal and that we'd talk in Mexico.

"When Buñuel got to Mexico, Gabriel Figueroa was considered the czar of the Mexican film world.[69] His first cousin was, at the time, president of the country: Adolfo López Mateos. Whatever Gabriel Figueroa wanted to do was given official support and great respect, not to say interest, on the part of the people who worked in film. As you know, most film here is made with government subsidies. It's a disgusting, pathetic excuse for cinema. All the work is done through an entrenched system, a bank…. I'm not sure if you know about all this."

"I've worked in Mexican film for many years."

"Okay. Then you know about it. I believe the worst film in the world is Mexican. It's a personal opinion that I've repeated more than once."

"I don't know if I'd go quite that far, because I don't know many other film industries, but…."

"So, the problem was this: Gabriel Figueroa either offered or had already offered señor Buñuel a film in which he'd direct the biggest star of Mexican film: María Félix. But they hadn't finalized anything, and I think that's why señor Buñuel had gone to Spain. But now that he's back from Spain, they start to formalize the agreement, their intention of making the film with señor Buñuel. And that's the source of the tremendous respect I feel for señor Buñuel as a man. My affection for him would come later, when we'd spent more time together. Señor Buñuel and I hadn't signed anything; there wasn't a single signature between

us. There was a telegram saying, 'I accept your proposal,' but apart from that, nothing. In the strange atmosphere of cinema, where people say one thing at night and the next morning something different and at noon something else again, the most natural thing would have been for señor Buñuel to accept Gabriel Figueroa's proposal. In reality, compared to Gabriel Figueroa in the world of film, I was a mouse—not even that, less than a mouse. I had never ever made a film. But señor Buñuel called me and said, 'Señor Alatriste, I have an agreement with you. Señor Figueroa has made me an offer. Señor Pedro Galindo, María, etc. And I've told all of them that I'm not in a position to accept their offer unless you release me from our agreement. So I beg you to go with me to a meeting with Figueroa and Galindo.' That meeting took place at the Churubusco Studios. Figueroa was there, along with Galindo. They told señor Buñuel, in front of me, how wonderful their proposed film would be, how much money they were planning to spend on production, etc., and once they were all sure they'd convinced him and, just incidentally, me—since I was nothing but a mouse in all that context, Pedro Galindo turned to me and said, 'Afterwards, he can make a film with you, if you're still interested,' as if the matter were decided. Then señor Buñuel answered them. 'Look. I have an agreement with señor Alatriste. If señor Alatriste releases me from the agreement, then we can talk about your film.' Galindo and Figueroa said, 'Okay. But surely señor Alatriste will understand since ours is going to be such an important film, isn't that right, señor Alatriste?' Then I said, 'No.' Just that. 'I don't agree.'

"Señor Buñuel was in a fairly tight economic situation at the time. If not tight, it wasn't exactly easy. So it really caught my attention that he should rely solely on my word. We went to the Churubusco café. You probably know the place. Señor Buñuel told me, 'Okay, señor Alatriste, you tell me what we do now, when we're going to start. I don't know if you're going to like what I write, and you haven't even asked me how much I charge.' I hadn't asked him about any of that. He told me, with great modesty, 'Well, look: for writing the screenplay and directing the film, I charge 150,000 pesos.' (That's what he had charged for *Nazarín*.) I remember clearly that I said it didn't seem like much money to me, that I would pay 350,000 pesos. He smiled and said, 'Great. Let's get started. If you like, I'd be grateful if you can send me a check for 50,000 pesos tomorrow'—he may not have believed me about the 350,000—'Send me the check for 50,000, and I'll start writing.'

"The next day, I sent him the 50,000 pesos. We still hadn't signed any papers at all. We've never signed anything. He started work. Two weeks or a month later, he called me—no, it was later, more than a month, I think. 'I have what I've written. Do you want to hear it?' I said, 'Do I need to hear it?' 'Well, it's not exactly necessary.' All this is more or less what he said. 'It's not necessary, but the producer usually hears what the writer has written or what the director plans to do.' I said, 'Fine, fine.' We got together at my house, Silvia, don Luis and his assistant, Julio Alejandro—I think it was Julio Alejandro—and I. When he finished reading the work and asked me what I thought of it, I said, 'Well, I think they're two different films or two different stories, but don't pay any attention to me. I don't know anything about film. I'm totally ignorant.' And he went back to writing. When he had finished the film—finished or almost finished writing it—he told me that the film might be called *Viridiana*.

"Silvia, the lady I was with then, was in Spain filming something. I had been to Spain, and I liked it a lot. So I made don Luis a proposition. By then, we knew each other better, and I admired his talent, the way he thought, the straight-forward way he spoke to me. I

asked him, 'Listen, don Luis. What if we made this film in Spain?' '*Hombre*, Gustavo, I haven't thought about it, I don't think….' 'But if we made it in Spain, I think your contact with your native ground, with Spain, would produce an extraordinary film. And more than that: from an economic point of view, we're looking at two very different things: a Buñuel filming in Mexico, where he's made a lot of films, and a Buñuel filming in Spain, where he's never filmed anything.' I don't want to go on too long about this. It wasn't all that hard to convince him—just like it wasn't all that hard to get him on a plane. He'd never flown. When I was waiting for him in the airport at Barajas [Madrid], he got off the plane looking half dead. Since I didn't know what to say, I lied, 'Don Luis, you look really well!' That's why now every time we see each other, he says, 'How do I look, Gustavo? Because if you tell me I look very chic, it means I'm in bad shape.' Anyway, he spent two weeks in a clinic, because that flight totally undid him.

"I needed or thought I needed (what did I know about film?) a Spanish company so that the film could qualify for the different subsidies they give Spanish film. Don Luis told me, 'Look, Gustavo, if you're looking for Spanish co-producers, you have to use UNINCI [Unión Industrial Cinemtográfica], because they're friends of mine. There's Dominguito (that's what he called Domingo Dominguín), there's [the director Antonio] Bardem and an Italian boy and the son of the man who has the yogurt company—a Catalonian—and Muñoz Suay, so you have to make the film with them.' Since I respected him, I went to UNINCI, and my first impression of Domingo Dominguín was not a good one. I told don Luis (we were living in the Torre de Madrid), 'Don Luis, I don't like Dominguito. What you say about him as a joke—that he's only good for comic bullfights with dwarves—is true. You say it as a joke, but it's true.' Don Luis was offended, 'If you don't make the film with them, then I won't make it in Spain.' 'Okay, okay, then I'll make it with them.'

"The arrangement was this: I would put up all the money, and they wouldn't put up any. Anyway, my basic concern was to get the film made. A film that I didn't know anything about, because I hadn't read the script, because after that meeting when he read me two scripts, I've never read or listened to another of his scripts. All I do is talk to him, and he tells me, 'Here's what I want.' And that's what happens. Fine. The film is made and presented. It's presented as a Spanish film. That is, the Spanish producers, UNINCI, put it up for the selection of films that go to Cannes, and the selection committee refuses it on the grounds that it's a bad film. That's what I've heard. Then señor Buñuel tells me, 'Look, Gustavo. If you take the film to France, Favre will invite it to the festival. Favre [le Bret], the director of the Festival. So, I got the invitation from Favre, I accept and *Viridiana* competes in France as a film without a country, without a flag, without a damned thing. Buñuel goes to France to make what the Spaniards call the *mezclas* [mix], because in those days in Spain the sound was terrible, and I go back to Mexico to deal with some business.

"The film was supposed to be shown in Cannes the thirteenth or fourteenth of May, 1961. The festival was ending on the nineteenth; that is, they would show the final films on the eighteenth and then announce the prizes on the nineteenth. I got to Paris on the tenth of May. I arrived in the morning, and at noon I went to see *Viridiana*, to see the first copy that came out of the laboratory. I understand that usually they present the fifth or sixth or seventh copy—whichever comes out the best—at the festival, but we didn't have time. There was only one copy. I went to see it eating one of those crepes they sell here in Paris stuffed with cheese or some such stuff. I was exhausted, but there was no time to rest; the film had

to go to Cannes that night. I remember that I started eating that bread thing, but I only ate a bite, because the film was so interesting that I lost my appetite, everything. When I came out, don Luis asked me—as I remember, he wasn't in the projection room, but his wife was—he asked me what I thought of the film. 'I know nothing about film, but I'd bet my life that this one wins the Palme d'Or,' which is the award they give in Cannes.

"On the fifteenth, they showed a film called *Une Aussi longue absence* [*The Long Absence*] by Colpi. There was a party that night at the Argentine embassy, and everybody toasted the film, which they said would win the big prize. My first surprise at Cannes is that Domingo González 'Dominguín,' Bardem and the Director General of Cinematography in Spain, a gentleman who was named Muñoz Fontán, but who was such an idiot that I couldn't bear him, were all there. Fine.

"On the seventeenth, they showed another film that was either *Two Women* [Vittorio de Sica] or *Mother Joan of the Angels* [Jerzy Kawakrowicz], I don't remember which. *Mother Joan* was an amazing film, by the way. I saw Colpi's film, and it struck me as extremely slow; with the time difference, I kept falling asleep in it. Anyway, it didn't really do much for me. But I also remember that we got together on La Croisette and that Domingo González told me I should settle for any prize or even an honorable mention. 'What else can you do?' Domingo had a lot of charm, and he always made me laugh, but he was a shady individual, and I knew that, sooner or later, he'd stab me in the back. I'd found out the gentleman had left various bills unpaid in Spain and they were still hanging over him.

"The film was shown on the eighteenth, the last day of the festival. I remember that when we got to Cannes nobody paid any attention to Silvia, who played the protagonist. Paco Rabal had come from Italy. Nobody paid any attention to the Spanish actors, nor the Mexicans, nor any of us. So I asked Silvia if she wanted to see the show at three in the afternoon, at the session set up for the foreign press, in the small theater at the Festival Palace. Silvia refused to go. I don't know if the opinions of the UNINCI people had left a mark on her or what. But I was sure, as sure as I've ever been of anything in my life, that I had a film that was—to use one of my favorite expressions—a cannon, a film that could not be ignored. And that's what happened. I went with those gentlemen from the foreign press, and there were people there, including one correspondent who tried to light his cigarette without taking his eyes off the screen and burned his finger. When the film ended, the foreign correspondents ran out of the theater, saying 'This is a bomb. How did he manage to make it in Spain?' Or 'What kind of authorities does Spain have? Who is Franco really?' And 'This is incredible! This is the best film Buñuel's ever made!' One of them said it was Goya, pure Goya.

"I went back to our room and told Silvia: 'Look. The reaction to the film is amazing. It's going to win the Palme d'Or.' I went back for the six o'clock showing, and now there wasn't enough room for the crowd. They were even sitting in the aisles. They showed it at three and again at six, and when Buñuel's name appeared, there was an incredible ovation. Three or four times during the projection, the audience clapped and shouted. So at the night-time session the ovation was just amazing. Afterwards, we went for supper at a restaurant in one of the hotels there—I don't remember which—and Domingo González said, 'Well, after all this, I can tell you it's just possible that this film might even win the Critics' Award, because Buñuel has friends,' and so on. I told him to go to hell, without mincing my words. His jokes didn't amuse me anymore. I said, 'If they're honest in this festival, our

film will make a clean sweep, because it's so much better than anything I've seen, and the film they say is the great favorite for the Palme d'Or, *The Long Absence*, is a piece of crap.'

"The next day in all the newspapers the headlines read: '*Viridiana*, a bomb.' And, 'The members of the jury have been in consultation all day long, because *Viridiana* has totally changed the order of the prizes.' From the fifteenth, when I got there, Silvia had been telling me over and over until I was beginning to get bored that I needed to start a publicity campaign for *Viridiana.* When I asked what a page of one of the five newspapers that came out there would cost, I realized I would have to spend twenty or thirty thousand dollars in publicity, a subject I knew nothing about. I told her, 'I didn't come here to get a publicity prize! I came to get a prize for the film. I'm not doing publicity.'

"At the end, there was a sense of expectation. That morning people started to come see me about buying *Viridiana.* I was asking for astronomical sums, and they started paying those prices. To cut this story short, three o'clock that afternoon when we were eating, the photographers almost tore down the door, and everybody began shouting, '*Viridiana,* Palme d'Or!' I can't explain what I really felt, but what I can tell you, señor Aub, is that I had a sense of happiness and huge satisfaction. It wasn't a surprise. I never felt surprised. I talked to Buñuel. I started drinking lots of champagne. Buñuel was in Paris. I called him there to tell him the news, and he told me over the phone, 'You're just drunk.' 'Yes, I'm drunk, but the film won the Palme d'Or.' Pedro Armendáriz, who's dead now, was on the jury. When he came up to congratulate me, he said, 'I want you to know that I voted against *Viridiana*, but since then I've realized that it's an amazing film.'

"The presentation of the awards was a let-down. The Mexican in me must have come out, but it really bothered me that a Spaniard got up to receive the prize and that they played the National Hymn to the Spanish flag and not to the Mexican flag and that the Director General of Cinematography and that rascal Domingo González were very much on the scene. But that passed when they mentioned Buñuel's name, and the ovation lasted seven or eight minutes solid. I'll never forget that moment. Some people cried. I think it must have been the happiest moment of Silvia's life, because they'd never taken so many photographs of her as they did then, and so on. So, it was a moment I'll never forget.

"We went back to Paris, and the stringer for the *Osservatore Romano* ['Roman Observer'], a pathetic cretin, said that the film was blasphemous and anti-religious, a series of stupid gestures worthy of a fucking ass. The film had already been headlined in all the Spanish press: 'Spain, Palme d'Or.' But when the *Osservatore Romano,* when that pitiful excuse for a newspaper, published its review, the Spanish press shut up. Domingo González came to tell me that the situation was very difficult in Spain, that they couldn't get hold of the film. I got the impression that he wanted to steal it. This is another of señor Buñuel's gestures that I want to tell you about. Señor Buñuel had stood up for Domingo González and defended him whole-heartedly whenever I spoke about him. We got together in the hotel—I don't remember if it was the L'Aiglon or the Raphaël—where I was staying. But I do remember that don Luis told Domingo, 'If you signed the film, you've fucked yourself, and if you are sent to jail, then you'll have to go to jail, but respect what you've signed, and be a man about it.' Domingo González didn't pay him the least mind, and he went off with the film and sold it to Switzerland. This is another long story.[70]

"I went back to Mexico without getting more involved. I'm a person who sometimes has an interest in money and sometimes doesn't. In other words, money has a very relative

interest for me. At heart, maybe I don't have that much interest in it, because if I did, I'd have a lot more…. I went back to Mexico, and I asked don Luis, 'What do you want to do?' He answered, 'I want to make "Los náufragos de la calle de la Providencia" ["The castaways on Providence Street"] [an earlier title for *El ángel exterminador*].' (By this time don Luis and I had a grand relationship; I felt not just respect for him, but great affection. He was the most important person for me, especially in film. He meant a lot to me.) He said, 'But, listen, Gustavo. There's no real role for Silvia in "Los náufragos" or only a small role. Very small.' 'So what? Film it.'

"I also remember that I had a big falling out with Silvia over that film, but the fight had the same effect on me as if you started smoking a cigarette and then stopped smoking it. It didn't bother me. When I make up my mind, I may be sorry about it for a little while, but not for long. I forget quickly. The film was made. Silvia worked in it and did so very professionally, by the way. I think it's one of don Luis Buñuel's best films. Maybe it's the best, I'm not sure. I'm not really able to judge his work, but I think it's incredible. I took the film to Cannes, but I became convinced that they are real crooks there. They had changed. They committed the first injustice when they gave the Palme d'Or to *Viridiana ex aequo* with Colpi's film. It's a dirty festival driven by sales, and it's really useless. I would never take another film I've made with señor Buñuel back to Cannes. I took *El ángel exterminador,* a superb film, much better than anything else there, and at lunch one day with one of señor Buñuel's critics, a Frenchman, I don't know if you'll remember him.

"I don't know all of them."

"Anyway, one of them. He's married to a French actress. I don't remember her name. He told me they hadn't given the prize to *El ángel exterminador,* because the year before *Viridiana* had won it. Later on, don Luis confirmed what that man told me. They gave the prize to *O pagador de promesas* [*The Given Word*] by the Brazilian Anselmo Duarte, one of the falsest films I've ever seen. Later a lot of things happened that led to my getting to know don Luis better, and I came to this conclusion: I think señor Buñuel makes the most honest film I've ever seen. I don't like to make comparisons. I can't compare him with anybody. I think he's the best director in the world by far. There's a huge difference between his work and any other director's. He's honest with himself. He's true to his principles. He's human, intensely human. He may have some defects, but I don't care. I'm not interested in them. I love him as he is. He's a friend that I respect, that I love and he makes me laugh until I cry. He has the most marvellous sense of humor I've ever known. If he just turned his first ideas into a film, I don't think a person could even take it in. He has such a sense of humor, he makes you laugh so much, he creates situations that are so incredible, so funny, so special…. Since don Luis is timid—my impression is that he's timid—he has a marvelous inner world. I would ask him, 'So, how do you know about all these things if you don't do them?—talking about women—I do do them, but you don't, so how do you know about these things?' He answered me, 'Because apart from reading and consulting, I have my imagination. I think. I concentrate.'"

"Tell me a little about *Simón.*"

"*Simón del desierto* was lacking in so many things that it could have been an awful film. We could say that in *Simón* don Luis just filmed for a few hours, no more than eleven days, probably less, maybe just nine days. The choice of location was unfortunate, since it was on the route of the cyclones. The location was awful, so that at ten in the morning we

had a little time to shoot and at eleven another little time and maybe another at twelve. If don Luis had had sufficient resources, I think he would have made a marvelous film. Even as it is, I think *Simón* is an amazing film. I didn't lose any money on it. In fact, I didn't lose any money at all. Buñuel has given me something very important, and that's prestige. I think different producers have different things in mind. Some are more interested in money; others are more interested in prestige. I can't say that the only reason I hooked up with Buñuel was for prestige. No, because my admiration and my great respect for him also are part of the picture. I've repeated it so often it sounds like an obsession.

"One of the things that bothers me about Mexico is that, while being treated to his presence, the government of the Republic has ignored him, has not even recognized who he is. This is all the more unfortunate if you bear in mind that the Mexican politician generally has some sensitivity. Buñuel should be subsidized. His films should be paid for by the government. I'm sure Buñuel would give Mexico an enormous prestige with these films that some people consider antisocial. You can say, for example, that a lot of people I have met never heard of Sweden until they saw Bergman's films. Mexico has the good luck—what a strange contrast!—it has the worst directors in the world and, at the same time, the best one. But the government makes films with its worst directors, not with its best."

"Well, now Buñuel is saying that he only wants to make films in Mexico."

"Look, that's always been don Luis's intention: to make films in Mexico. If he's had to leave Mexico, it's been for economic reasons more than for any other. I think he's an authentic Mexican as far as…. I don't know how to explain it to you. He's a Mexican with an enormous talent, with—as he would put it—his own forms of expression, but they have a grudge against him. We Mexicans are full of complexes. We have complexes about race. I've been in Spain. I adore Spain, but I see that the Spaniards have a lot of complexes about a lot of different things. Our politics, the way we greet each other, these are things we've inherited from the Spaniards. So the Mexican is fucked, because he's a mixture of Spanish and Indian. There could hardly be a worse combination. That's my personal opinion."

"It's not that personal, but there's no reason to get too worried."

"I don't really worry."

"There's no reason to worry at all, and, besides, Buñuel doesn't worry either. And I, who could say the same thing about the theater and about literature, I don't worry either. If it's good, it will come out sooner or later. And you, as you've said so well, are an excellent salesman."

"That's what don Luis says. There are two phrases of mine that he likes a lot. The first is: 'What the hell is power for if it's not to be abused?' Here's the other: 'I may be a jerk, a rascal, a thief, but I'm also an excellent salesman.' That one really makes him laugh."

[Aub asks about Buñuel's defects, and Alatriste says he doesn't have any, but that] "he has so much talent, you have to forgive them."

"That's good."

"And that if people don't like it, they can go fuck themselves. Right?"

"And then piss off."

"Fuck themselves, and then piss off. With all that talent of course he has defects! Look, don Luis is a man who has never given in in his life, certainly not in film. Now, right now, I think he's at his best economically. I think he could charge half a million dollars for each film, but he doesn't know how to administer his talent. For example, he hates to direct

vedettes, but I think he could direct a Liz Taylor or a Richard Burton, people like that. I'm sure he could, because I've heard it; they've told me they'd do it, they would work with don Luis in a heartbeat and do it here, in Mexico. I've heard, I don't know who the hell said it, probably don Luis himself, that he's tight with his money. It's not true."

"It's been said a lot."

"It's been said by shitheads, right? And also that he's a queer."

"That's been said too. Don't worry about it."

"No, no way. Don Luis isn't tight. He's very particular about things. If he likes something, he'll pay whatever price they ask. And he doesn't worry about his salary or about what something costs. But what he won't accept is someone's taking advantage of him. For example, when we go to a restaurant, and he sees that they're selling *Beaujolais* at 185 pesos, he protests and says, 'Even if I had a million dollars, I wouldn't pay it.' That happened. But later on he might find some little item he likes that's worth ten pesos, and he'll pay three hundred.

"… He did one thing that really caught my attention and hurt me. You know that he's a real gun collector, no? Well, one day he went and sold all his guns. He gave some away, and he sold some for not much money. I didn't know he was going to sell them, because I would have bought them at whatever price, twenty-five thousand or two hundred thousand. I didn't care. But he didn't tell me, because he knew that if I bought them I would give them back to him. We talked a lot about those famous pistols, and I asked him why he had sold them. He told me he didn't want anything material attached to him, or for himself to be attached to anything material. And it's true, but it was the only thing that entertained him, apart from thinking his thoughts in his own way, sitting down to think and eating tomatoes every morning. I know he amused himself with his pistols, cleaning them, even looking at them. It was touching that he should sell them. It's very difficult to define or judge a person."

…

Fernando Rey

This brilliant actor played a kind of alter ego to Buñuel in Viridiana, Tristana *and* Cet Obscur Objet du désir. *The doubling is not so marked in* Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*, but the director still shared a number of his personal details with the ambassador of Miranda. Over the years, the two became close friends.*

…

"One day I asked Luis if Tristana's dream, if that obsession she has when she sees don Lope's head as the clapper of a bell, if it was related at all to the poem that Federico had dedicated to him, the poem that's 'Dedicated to the Head of Luis Buñuel.' Luis said it wasn't. The poem goes: 'Dedicated to the Head of Luis Buñuel. En gros plan.' And it's called, 'Ribereñas (con acompañamiento de campanas)' ('Riverside Girls [Accompanied by Bells']). I asked him because of the dedication, and because the poem is very onomatopoeic:

They say you have the face
(balalín)

of the full moon
(balalán).
So many bells, do you hear?
(balalín)
They won't let me
(balalán)
But your eyes…. Ah!
(balalín)
… the circles under your eyes
(balalán)
and that laugh of gold
(balalín)
And that…. I can't … that
(balalán).

Her stiff crinoline
Beaten by the bells.

Oh your secret delight! … you…
(balalín,
lín
lín
lín…)

Pardon me.[71]

* * *

"Tell me about your time in Cadaqués, your conversations with Dalí about *Tristana*?"

"Dalí had seen the film in Paris, and he liked it a lot. His first comment when some journalists asked what he thought about it was, 'It's obvious that Buñuel likes Spain.' It was a way to get around the question. But afterwards, in Cadaqués, just talking to me, he said that he had liked the film a lot. He insisted the film showed that Buñuel was a man who really liked his country, who was very Spanish and who loved Toledo. And he commented that the scene with the chocolate had impressed him. Since Dalí is what the Italians would call *spiritoso* [quick-witted], he notices these things, and he told me that since seeing the film he had started drinking hot chocolate with his friends every afternoon. But what impressed him even more—that's how it seemed to me—is Tristana's limp. In relation to that limp, he came up with a number of ideas—you know what he's like—he invents everything. He said he loved the fact that Tristana is lame, because a woman with one leg is much better than a woman with two, and it would be even better if the one-legged woman had only 3 toes. That way you'd only have to suck three toes instead of sucking five. And then he came up with a very amusing theory about cripples, according to which they are critical in the workings of the world. He said, for example, that the fire in the Novedades Theater had ended in many deaths, because a cripple's crutch had gotten caught in the door when the audience, terrified, was trying to get out and that led to many victims. Then he said that cripples can have a great effect in a nucleus of people at specific times, and that's why—whenever he has a show in New York—he gets his secretaries to find lots of cripples—twelve or fourteen—and to mix them in with the regular guests, because, he says, when those cripples move through the crowd they produce a special sort of agitation that encourages people to drink more, and they knock over the cocktails and create an atmosphere and a sense of excitement that winds up producing a great sale."

"What's your impression of Gala?"

"Gala's a woman I've only met recently. I feel a certain uneasiness in her presence, a feeling of discomfort. I don't know that we could really call it a kind of inferiority complex. Let's leave it at that."

"Okay. You've made two films with Luis [*Viridiana* and *Tristana* at the time of the interview]. Have you noticed any differences between them? I mean differences related to the passage of time and his greater age? And, another question, what do you think of the way he directs actors?"

"First, I have to say that I didn't know anything about Luis before I met him. I had seen almost all the films he had made before *Viridiana,* and I hated some of them—to the point of walking out."

"Out of which one?"

"*Él,* to be precise. I got bored. I thought it was a joke, that he was just having us on. In other words, I didn't identify at all with Buñuel although *Un Chien Andaou* and *L'Âge d'or* had made a big impression on me. But Luis as a screenwriter didn't do much for me. Afterward I liked *Los olvidados,* which is from that period, but I didn't see it until later. I've come to understand *Él* better, but at the time, I walked out on it. Later on, in Mexico, a group of friends we have in common introduced me to Luis Buñuel. Things changed when I got to know him personally. Physically, he produces a kind of chain reaction in the person who meets him, at least in me, in which admiration and love and curiosity, too, just increase over time. This may have happened to me, because I'm very different from him, or because I saw in Buñuel the person I would have liked to be, at least on a personal level. During the *Viridiana* shoot—and it was an honor to be given that role—I began to love Luis Buñuel dearly. As to the professional part, he's a director who—without telling the actors too much—gives them a lesson every time he makes a suggestion or a correction. One thing about his directing is strange, at least to me, I can't speak for the others: I always feel uncomfortable acting in his films. That may sound odd, because the character I played in *Viridiana* and the character I've just finished playing in *Tristana* are great creations on his part, and they are absolutely convincing characters; however, I had a great sense of discomfort in front of the camera when I was interpreting those roles. I don't know the origin of that sense of discomfort, because I understand him very well, and I believe that we really communicate with each other. I can even guess many of his thoughts, and sometimes I allow myself the luxury of collaborating in those little practical details he uses in creating characters, and in the characters' movements. I might suggest, 'What if I touch the ashtray now?' And he usually agrees with the suggestions I make, not to improve, but to adorn my interpretation at a certain point in the film. But in spite of this, I have always felt an almost physical discomfort in front of the camera when Luis is behind it, and he tells me what movements to make and more or less what the scene is about. He almost never has to explain much, because it's a question of saying the dialogue. If you've read the screenplay, you know what's going on. But there's something about the position of the camera, there's something about the character's movement in front of the camera that always produces in me a feeling of discomfort, almost an oscillation in my mechanism. Perhaps that's what has produced the sense of spontaneity or purity or truth in the work I've done for him. Maybe it's because of that…."

"Because of that distance, we might say."

"That distance is, perhaps, what produces a contrary reaction and suppresses the actor's tendency to go on automatic pilot or to overact. And perhaps that discomfort produces a little awkwardness and that awkwardness reveals something fresh and convincing about the character at that particular moment.

"Another odd thing I may have mentioned before happens in Luis's films. You get to the set, having studied the scene and developed an idea of the character and how you're going to play him, or how the director will ask you to play him, and you get a feel for the set … the chairs and tables the little decorative elements that form part of the scene. With experience, you get so you can picture pretty clearly how all that will look on the screen the next day when you see the projection. Usually, this part bores me, because I know exactly what it will look like. Okay. But with Luis something amazing, almost magical, happens. You've made what is probably just a simple scene where, for example, you glance over to the right to look at another person who supposedly is over there, but when that scene is projected on the screen, that scene you've done yourself, it's full of surprises. You see things in the set that you hadn't paid attention to before. You discover little things you hadn't noticed. Your glance, which you thought was just a reaction to something, has been transformed. There's something magical about it, something you didn't put in it, and that's the mark he puts on his film. I believe it's one of his main virtues. I don't know if you'd call it a compulsion or.… I don't know what you could call it. But it does exist. You do more, or more appears, than what you've actually done. And these things appear almost magically, with an undercurrent that is totally unexpected in spite of everything I told you earlier. If I have to act out a scene here, I see immediately where everything is, and if I have to walk toward that corner, I know that you'll always see that painting in the background. Fine, but working with Luis, you really discover all of that on the screen later."

"Working with Luis, have you ever felt the possibility of a transmission of thought?"

"Up to a point, it must have happened, something of that sort, because otherwise I couldn't possibly have done some of the things I did with Luis, including these two characters [don Jaime in *Viridiana* and don Lope in *Tristana*] in which, for the first time, as a spectator, I felt as though I were watching my double on the screen. I never like to watch the films I've made, but in Buñuel's films, I've sat down and watched myself as though the actor on the screen were a different person."

"As you already know, in his youth, from the time he was twenty until he was about thirty-five, one of Luis's favorite things was hypnotizing people."

"Yes, but another odd thing is that Luis sometimes holds back. Sometimes I notice that he's afraid of reaching certain extreme situations, which he ultimately does reach, almost without realizing it. But he's afraid of going too far. There's always the fear that things will go just a little too far, and he tries to exercise a degree of caution. It's an odd thing that the spectator may not be aware of."

"That fear of going too far, isn't it just his fear of melodrama?"

"Possibly, possibly it's his fear of melodrama, and as actors, we may try to bring too much to the scene. That may explain the limitations that he imposes on us at times, during certain actions, reactions, movements, etc. It's possible. That may be the explanation. There's a definite contradiction in Luis. There are two very clear tendencies in his, let's say, in his ascendant sign, speaking in astrological terms: one is his timidity. He's a timid person."

"Why? Because he's naturally timid? Or because life has made him timid?"

"I don't really know. I'd guess that he's naturally timid. I know the Buñuel family, and their children are timid. His sister Conchita, whom I admire enormously and who is the most forthright and most intelligent Buñuel on the feminine side, or on any side, is terribly shy."

"On the other hand, Margarita is extraordinarily extroverted."

"Yes, she's an extrovert and full of life, but as a general norm in the family, for whatever it's worth, my impression is that the Buñuels are essentially timid. I can't really analyze someone whom I love and admire and who is, on top of that, the person I would have liked to be. I would have liked to be Buñuel."

…

Rey continues, "There's a funny thing about Buñuel in terms of technique: He's absolutely convinced that he doesn't know anything about cinematic technique. I don't think it's a pose. I think he sincerely believes it."

"That's not true."

"I think it is. Because, for example, the first two or three reels of *Tristana* are a little awkward. When he watched them in the projection he confessed that he would have liked to shoot them over because they didn't communicate clearly what he wanted. Of course, that comes from a perfectionist, because Buñuel is a perfectionist. And he may have been right about them. On the other hand, as a director, he brings off one of the hardest things: the rhythm. You have to remember that in Buñuel's films there's no background music—an evil invention, don't you think? So, Luis's films, sequence after sequence, are a tightrope walk without a net. And his main virtue as a director, or at least one of his main virtues, is that capacity, that instinct for maintaining the rhythm of a film in sequence after sequence. In the scenes, he's less concerned with a regular rehearsal, than with mapping out the movements of each one of the characters in front of the camera and with the camera movement, which is never showy or emphatic or too modern; it's always very simple, intended to maintain the rhythm of the film.

"Another thing that concerns him and that he manages with great ability is the question of dimensions, the dimensions of the characters in front of the lens, where they are cut by the lens he's using now and where they'll be cut by the next lens he uses or in the next frame to maintain continuity with the preceding shot. I think this kind of painting or drawing that he does is just amazing and very hard to copy too."

"I totally agree, but all that's owing to Luis's enormous experience as an editor and his interest in painting, even though he doesn't admit to liking it, and he doesn't want to have paintings at home, and the few he has he doesn't want."

"You're right. Luis can stand in front of a painting for hours and hours looking at it and almost caressing it. When we shot *Viridiana,* he showed me a painting of the *Last Supper,* and he spent almost half an hour showing it to me. He looked at it with love, with affection; he almost caressed it. Painting really has had a great influence on him, but as far as editing goes, I'm not so sure. Even though he's a great editor, his films are shot in such a way that they can be mounted almost as they are, because he edits them before he films them."

"Yes, that's what people say, and it may be part of his talent for rhythm and continuity."

"It's a musical continuity. Luis was a great fan of music, and he's had musical training.

His deafness, of course, has put a stop to that, but if he's not a composer of symphonies, he is a man who composes his scenes before he goes on the set. One day I told him, 'Luis, I'm going to a concert this afternoon'—Brahms's *Requiem,* I think—and he said, deeply moved, 'How I envy you! If only I could hear it! If only I could hear it!' He told me that he can hear music in his mind, that he can produce an imaginary concert and listen to it, music that has never been written, and that he dreams about that music."

"And even remembers it."

"Yes, he does. There's another interesting side of Luis: his terrible concern about the length of a film. He doesn't want the film to go on too long, doesn't want the audience to get bored. He wants them to be entertained."

"Part of that concern is economic. He produced a number of films that he doesn't want to admit he filmed, and he had to do it with a very tight budget. He never goes beyond twenty feet of a scene, because he knows perfectly well that he'll have to cut there to go on to the next scene."

"Exactly."

"And that's one of the reasons the producers adore him."

"He's a great organizer. Luis would be the best head of production in the world. He has a fabulous capacity for organizing a film from the other side, from the production side. Yet, in spite of that, Luis Buñuel is a poet of great feeling. I've seen him get choked up at certain moments as only a man of feeling, a man of great humanity could."

"Can you remember any of these moments specifically?"

"For example, when we were making the scene in *Tristana* in which I come out of my meeting with the painter—remember it?—a cold meeting, in which I am very controlled. I tell him that Tristana is sick, that she has a malignant tumor and that they may have to amputate her leg. When the painter decides that she should come back to my house, I agree in a very cold way as though I were doing him a favor, but as I come out of the door, there's an abrupt change in my personality that I truly felt. And when I see Saturna, who's waiting for me in the street, I'm a different person, and almost with tears in my eyes, I tell her, 'She's coming home, Saturna. This time she won't get away.' Luis didn't expect my reaction, and he choked up. He was terribly moved. And I've also seen his tender feelings when we're talking about the little things in life, about the world of man, and animals and even plants. Luis is sensitive and full of poetry. I think the common denominator of all his films is the human being treated with terrible injustice by nature and by the institutions he's subjected to. His concern for the baby who cries when he's first born, who gets sick, who as a youth begins to face the great problems of sex, of religion, of politics, of human relationships, who becomes mature and then is confronted by the inevitable arrival of old age, which is another problem that bothers Luis without exactly becoming the fear of death. So, the unjust treatment by Nature of a being that Nature itself created, is, I think, his main theme, his musical rondo."

"You were with him in Toledo for two months. What do you think is his most recent position regarding religion?"

"It's a hard question. I've never really understood what Luis believes on this subject. My impression is that Luis plays with the useful elements he finds in religion, but at the heart of the matter, the part that relates to dogma, his attitude is very different."

"Orthodox?"

"I don't know. It really bothers him when they say his films are blasphemous."

"But his first films were, in fact, blasphemous."

"Viewed from the present day, they really aren't so much."

"Of course. But we're not talking about how they seem now, but how he saw them at the time he made them, up to *El ángel exterminador* where there's a very obvious change in Luis, right?"

"Yes. But there's always an element of anticipation in Luis. If you shook out all his films, the experiences that he's taken from his infancy, from his childhood, would float out. He's a man who, up to a point, is obsessed with one single thing and deaf to everything else. But, in spite of that, he also has a capacity for anticipation, and he doesn't turn back. For example, in *El ángel exterminador* there's a scene that really has nothing to do with the film, in which the Mexican police shoot down a number of people. That actually happened about ten years later, a scene we saw on the news [the Tlatelolco massacre]. Why is that scene in *El ángel exterminador*? It's one of the things I've asked myself often. So, going back to religion, the same thing might have happened. Luis may have just anticipated the present-day movement in the Church, with the concepts that have come out of the Vatican Council."

"Good point. But in all of that, there's a certain portion of naïve utopianism which combines both anticipation and nostalgia. Where I don't agree with you is the idea that in some of his films there are scenes that don't relate to the rest of the film. As I see it, they never ever fail to say something in the context of the film."

"Fine, fine. That's part of the artist's creative work, but sometimes they're just *boutades,* just gags. Once I commented that I was noticing Aragonese jokes in some of his films. '*Hombre*, so now it turns out that I'm a director of comedies,' but most of his films make me laugh. I've laughed more in *La Voie Lactée* than in any other film I've ever seen in my life. And there are a lot of things that I don't know why they're in the film; I don't know why he's put them in."

"Which ones?"

"I'm not sure. I can't remember details now. Once I asked him about it, and he told me that he didn't know either."

"He doesn't know, but they correspond to an idea, to what he wanted to say and sometimes didn't dare say or wasn't allowed to do or say."

"Maybe so, but in that case it's part of what I was saying before—about that kind of anticipation in his films."

"That's exactly what surrealism is all about."

"Yes, a monster that's inside, and you have to get it out somehow, and that's the way he does it, right? What I don't believe is that these things are never symbolic. I've never been convinced by his insistence on that notion."

"I totally agree, because surrealism, among many other things—and with a little help from Dadaism—is totally anti-symbolic. There may not be any symbolism in Buñuel's films, but there are certainly elements that produce reactions in people that are very close to symbolism."

"Exactly. And at the same time, I see in Buñuel something I'm not sure has been said. He's very up-to-date. Even though he always works on a handful of obsessions, almost on a single theme or concern, Luis is very up-to-date."

"What do you mean by up-to-date?"

"He follows what happens in the world very closely, because—even though he hates the media—he depends on it, and he's up-to-date on many things. He says he never goes to the movies, and then you realize he's seen all, or nearly all, the recent films. He says he doesn't feel like reading and he'd prefer to just sit at home, smoking a cigarette and watching a fly buzzing around, and then you realize that he's read everything important that's been published lately. And that means that he's living in his time and even a little ahead of it. For example, I think *Tristana* is of our time. Suddenly, he's opposed to things he used to be in favor of, and he returns to a certain romanticism. Making *Tristana* six years ago, he anticipated the romanticism that has now become a recognizable phenomenon: a return to romanticism, to love stories, a rejection of pornography, and even though [Arthur Hiller's] *Love Story* is a phony, insipid film, it shows how Buñuel realized years ago the need for this return to an earlier mode of feeling. Because I believe that *Tristana* is, first and foremost, a love story."

"Well, maybe that explains why *Tristana* was so successful in the United States, something that nobody expected, starting with Buñuel and his producers."

"Exactly. That confirms my idea. Luis works with the past, with literature and memories that spring from the beginning of this century rather than 1971. In spite of all that and of the influence of the surrealist movement, which he really broke off with a long time ago, and which has little importance now. In spite of all those roots, he is, I believe, a man who's very much of the present. And yet, he's barely recognized in Spain, his native land."

Valentín Arteta Lusuviaga, S.J.

A Jesuit who made a close study of Buñuel's work and whom Buñuel, reportedly, appreciated as the only man who understood his faith. He is also responsible for much of the interview with Buñuel credited to Mosén Allanegui. (See introduction to that interview.)

[Aub asks Lusuviaga to talk more about the director's religious beliefs.]

"Luis Buñuel's faith … as a rational man, who is part of a culture and a period, a liberated person, a grown-up, he's definitely an atheist. He's an atheist for ideological reasons, and he is particularly marked, from his first work up to *Tristana* his last, by Sade's atheism. On the other hand, at a personal—subconscious or emotional—level, Buñuel is definitely religious, a Christian, but in a way that's hard to pin down. The theme of mysticism is important in his work. I consider Buñuel, at certain moments, one of the great mystics. Now I'm aware that situating Buñuel in that category isn't easy and that it may seem like a way to baptize him. But you can show the similarity between his characters and the mystics in our civilization, and you can show that the spirit of all his films, and the personality of the man himself, are not only touched by the highest form of mysticism, but that they actually create a new form of mysticism…. All of the major Buñuelian themes, including eroticism, are inconceivable without Christian mysticism."

[What follows is a detailed and intelligent examination of Buñuel's work as an illustration of Christian mysticism, which reads more as an essay than an interview.]

Mosén Vicente Allanegui: An Interview with Luis Buñuel

Allanegui, a doctor and clergyman, was a close friend of Luis's and shared his love for the folklore related to Calanda. Mosén *is an ancient clerical title used in Aragón. Although this interview appears in the 1985 Spanish edition and here only under Allanegui´s name, a typed document with handwritten corrections (AB2024/1–2) confirms Arteta´s important role (e-mail from Herrera, 11 December 2016; see also Herrera,* Luis Buñuel en su archivo *34, 36–37).*

"You were asking if I had found documentation for *Simón del desierto*. In 1940, in New York, one day when it was raining, I went to 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue, to the library, because I had been interested in the idea ever since Federico García Lorca brought me *The Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine, a Dominican from the twelfth or thirteenth century. Federico was laughing and laughing about a saint known as Simeon the Stylite. He said, 'Look, it's amazing. Imagine: it's a man on top of a column eighteen meters high, and he lived on it for years.' And he said that excrement dripped down the column, like wax drips down a candle, right? Well, that's a complete invention, because a man who doesn't eat anything but salad is not going to have abundant excretions. Simón says it in the film, 'My excrement,' he tells the pastor, 'is like a goat's, because it's so dry.' So Voragine made a mess of it. Like a good Dominican, he made a mess of it."

Silence.

"I'm joking, I'm joking."

"So?"

"I went to the library on 42nd Street, and there's an enormous card catalog. A room about twelve meters square, with thousands of little drawers with cards for the books. In the Espasa Encyclopedia I had seen about half a column of bibliography. There wasn't a lot, but it did mention Delahaye, who is a Bollandist…."

"From Brussels."

"Right. I saw his name there, and I went to look for the little drawer where the card on him should be, and somebody had taken it out. There were about a hundred people there looking at the catalog. They'd take out the drawer they needed, and on one of the tables, they'd note down the information so that they could request the book. So when I got to Delahaye, the drawer wasn't there, but right by the cabinet there was a table and a gentleman who was holding the card on Delahaye. In other words, in New York at five in the afternoon, a day when it was sleeting, there were two people who were interested in Simeon the Stylite. It's mysterious…. Well, nothing else happened. I didn't find Delahaye, and I didn't look for anything else. A little later, someone—I don't remember who—told me that a Dominican named Festugière, Father Festugière, had written a two-volume book on the anchorites or stylites. Festugière and Delahaye know more than anyone else in the world about these pillar saints. Festugière talks about five or six stylites, among them three saints, one of whom is Simeon, another is St. Lucas, and I don't remember the name of the third. One of them climbed up a column when he was eight years old, a little thing, and he stayed there until he was seventy-five or eighty. He came down when he was twelve, but he returned at fifteen.

"It was a myth that extended throughout the Orient and the north of Africa, but in Europe it didn't go beyond Italy and Greece. They turned up in the Caucasus and in the Ukraine, and there were also female stylites. It fascinated me. I read Festugière first, both volumes, and I took notes. Later my son Juan Luis went to the National Library [*sic*] in Washington—which is perhaps the best in the world—to find me Delahaye's work *Les Saints Stylites*. And three days later I had the book in my hands. Documentation always involves money, and there's lots of it in the United States. It's amazing, isn't it? In that way, the Americans protect culture although they destroy it in other ways. So, I read the most interesting part where there are fifteen or twenty stylites; it took into account what they were like, how they spoke, what went on, why they did it. It was the period of the anchorites in the Middle East."

"In Egypt."

"In Egypt, yes. In Egypt and Syria and almost all the eastern Mediterranean."

"Thebes."

"Thebes. And with those two books by the Dominican Festugière and that Bollandist…. Delahaye, I studied up. So that almost everything that appears in *Simón* is authentic. The documents they found were in Syrian, some in Hebrew, but almost none in Greek. So it wasn't an easy investigation; that's why there's so little documentation, I'm sure. And based on what I read, I developed the idea for *Simón del desierto,* which is absolutely authentic. The conversations that lead some people to say I was making fun of them are real. I wasn't making fun. I was just transcribing. I was actually worried that Festugière would take me to court for plagiarism. De la Haye is very careful not to take his ideas from Festugière, but from the documents the other cites."

"Fine."

"Translated from Syrian or from Hebrew. In short, *Simón del desierto* is a documentary. Except, of course, the thing about the devil. I threw in the devil myself. The devil pestered the anchorites, but they were innocent temptations. Since the monks were illiterate, the devil might prick them on their buttocks or keep them from sleeping…. I invented a few temptations more related to our century, no? But it's a documentary. *Simón* is a documentary."

"How would you have finished it?" …

"I had the idea that, after going to the cabaret, Simón succumbs to the sin of the flesh, a mortal sin, but later he returns to his column, and the devil tempts him again, and he dies in the fragrance of sanctity, but with…"

"But with a feeling of remorse."

"In mortal sin."

"Yes."

"And then I changed my mind and thought it should end like the story of Simeon the Stylite. I didn't like what I was coming up with."

"And die as a saint."

"Because later in Simeon the Stylite there were wars. Two emperors during the period of Roman decadence went to Simeon for advice on matters of state. I had the idea that after his death, there would be a fight over his body, to seize his remains…. There are the ruins of a monastery in Syria, near Antiochia, some fabulous ruins. It was a convent from the sixth century. And I had planned to have him die a saintly death on top of the column. For

me, it's extraordinary. He's like a candle, the flame of a candle, in Voragine's words. So we have the greatest spirituality alongside the greatest bestiality, the filth. So the fellow was really interesting to me. That's why I made *Simón.*

"Now, there are things I've taken from other documents, documents about saints in the Middle ages, for example an admirable document about the notion of property. That didn't come from the stylites. A monk from the fourteenth century, more or less, who didn't understand the meaning of property. That's in *Simón.* The monk who goes up to visit him says, 'Father, the barbarians are invading Rome, they are coming to Rome and soon they'll reach us.' Simón says, 'Very good. That way we'll suffer for our Lord.' And the other, 'And to think, all that's because this is yours, this is yours and this is mine.' 'What are you talking about?' Simón asks him. 'Nothing. It's about property. I will defend this, because it's mine. I'll defend it against anyone who tries to take it away from me, and I'll kill to defend it.' 'I don't understand.' 'I'll show you.' That's in *Simón.*"

"On the plane, no?"

"It's near the end when the monk climbs up the stair, a monk with a black beard."

"Oh, right."

"And he tells Simón, 'Look, I'll show you what is yours and what is mine. This bag is yours, isn't it?' He grabs the bag. 'Yes.' 'You eat the food in the bag, and it's yours.' 'Yes.' 'Fine, well let's see. This bag now is mine.' And the monk says, 'Say now that it's yours.' 'I don't understand. Okay, it's mine.' 'No. It's mine, and I'm keeping it.' 'Fine. Keep it.' It's nice, isn't it?"

"Very nice. I see it as a film with a deep religious sense about the struggle between good and evil."

"It's a documentary. Some idiots have said it's blasphemous…. There's a critic in Madrid, whose name I won't repeat. When he saw it, in Valencia, he called it a 'blasphemous film' and I don't know what else. 'In reality,' he said, 'the plot is this: a woman with a beard kicks a lamb.' I was furious."

"Of course."

"I saw that gentleman and told him, 'Señor, you are spreading misinformation. You can say that you don't like the film for whatever reason. Fine. I'm used to being kicked by the media. But what I don't like is that you're telling people that a woman with a beard is the Good Shepherd.' The Good Shepherd is young, you're right, and he has a blond beard, but since I was showing the devil, I put a woman in the role of the devil, and I gave her a blond beard. When he wants to tempt Simón, he says, 'Devote yourself to the pleasures of the flesh, come down from that column. You will be my most faithful student or disciple.' Simón realizes the heresy in all this, right? Because of 'the 'pleasures of the flesh' and so on. And he answers, 'Go away, *vade retro Satana.*' And Satan gives the lamb a kick. The paschal lamb. But it's the devil, not a woman with a beard. The critic just didn't get it."

"You're right."

"Because he's an ignoramus. Of course, not many people know about the stylites, but, no matter what, they should see that there's a lot of truth in the film. But it's all documented, all of it. There's more: 'You raised your eyes to look at a woman. That will not happen again in my presence.' It's all documented. Well, I invented the miracle myself. I really like the miracles that nobody pays much attention to."[72]

"The best part of the film is when the coffin suddenly arrives, scuddling across the

desert. 'The devil is there,' we said, 'the devil is coming.' Frankly, it's a much more direct film than *La Voie Lactée.* It reaches the public more directly, eh? And yet, they didn't see it in Valladolid. People just stayed outside in the vestibule, because they didn't realize they were going to see *Simón*."

"Of course, it's Spanish [so it's easier]. *La Voie Lactée* was hard for them to follow, because its French is difficult. In Spanish, it's hard for an ordinary movie-goer, but in French, it's much worse. *Simón* is different. The other one is made up, a complete invention; whereas, *Simón* is based on documents."

"Right, right, but what about *Tristana*? What's it about?"

"*Tristana* is a step backward in my career; it's an orderly, academic film: the description of a man's decline. A bourgeois gentleman. Bourgeois, but with anarchical, anticlerical tendencies, who winds up repudiating everything he's done in his life. The film doesn't spell it out, but it's clearly the story of a man's decline, that's all. But it's a step backward in my career. In *La Voie Lactée,* I broke away from order, from time and space, and now I return to an academic continuity."

"Well, here in Saragossa, people have really liked *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre.*"

"What have they liked?"

"*Le Journal d'une femme de chambre.* I don't think they've understood *El ángel exterminador.* "

"No, people don't understand it. I know."

…

"The most incredible thing," Buñuel carries on, "is that now they're saying—according to a book I've just read by a Jesuit, whose name escapes me—that the basis of everything is love, that God is love. That's something no Catholic of my generation believes."

"I know."

"Back then God was revenge; he was tremendous, unjust."

"Exactly. That's done a lot of harm."

"Unjust. For no good reason at all a person is condemned for all eternity.… So now they've come out with the other version, that God is love. If they'd only told me that when I was a kid."

"Exactly. Look. I believe…"

"I don't accept this new version. God is revengeful and ferocious. That's what they told me. That's the way it was, pure and simple."

"I believe part of the fault is ours, the priests,' because we've presented a disfigured image of God. Surely, God isn't like that."

"It's what the priests are saying now, but it's not what they said thirty years ago."

"It's a different generation, with different ideas."

"That God, as they used to tell us in our spiritual exercises, condemns an [otherwise] innocent man who's commited a mortal sin, condemns him for all eternity, that's what interested me in Simeon the Stylite. All his life was devoted to his faith, and even though pride is the origin of his penitence—because it is pride, a sin in itself—he's not aware of it. The time he lives in obliges him to do that, right? That this gentleman has such-and-such a thought, dies at that very moment and goes straight to hell. That's what I learned. Isn't that right?"

"Well, it's…."

"That's why He's ferocious. Ferocious. On the other hand, a sinner, Gilles de Rais, for example, a born criminal—the worst of criminals—infamous, sadistic, cruel, monstruous, blasphemous … and, at the end of his life, he kneels down and when he goes to trial, they judge him and weep. He killed eighty or a hundred children. He made the mothers of those children weep; there were a lot of them at the trial. And then the Church absolves him; they give him extreme unction, and he dies repentant. He will go to heaven, according to what I was taught…. So this gentleman is saved, and a poor soul who has spent all his life on top of a column, and without thinking says one day, 'What beautiful eyes that woman has!' and—bam!—he's condemned to hell. And later on, that sinner has the consolation of the famous bird that comes every thousand years and takes him…"

"…a drop of water."

…

"Instead of leading the way, the Church follows behind. And when it sees that scientific discoveries, the spirit of the century, whatever, is pressing on ahead, then it tries to adapt to that, but it's always a little behind. Today, for example, I heard father Arrupe, who is impressive. He said that the true mission of the Jesuits is to work together, to fight for the defenseless, for the poor, against capitalism.[73] Forty or fifty years ago, the Jesuits were famous for always being on the side of the rich. As an institution, the order was the closest to the great marquises, dukes, etc. That's why I can't see the universality or the eternity of the Church, because I see that it changes with the times, that it manages to tail on behind…. And now it's renewing itself again, but in three years—or thirty—it will be behind the times again."

…

Juan Luis Buñuel

Juan Luis, the first born of the family's two boys, worked on several of his father's films, and became a sculptor and a filmmaker himself.

"How old are you?"

"Thirty-four."

"And what do you think of your father's political opinions?"

"Of my father's political opinions? I don't know quite what to say. I have a high opinion of them, and I think his analysis of modern life is correct."

"What is his analysis of modern life?"

"What's going on now, that we don't know where we're going. There's a mixture of all sorts of ideologies. Our friends are enemies. We don't know which end is up."

"In other words, great confusion."

"Yes, the confusion of the modern world."

"You don't think that your father has been confused since he was born?"

"No."

"Why?"

"But what do you mean when you say 'confused'?"

"According to your father, the moment he closes his eyes, he feels like an anarchist or a nihilist. But as soon as he opens them, he's not and never has been."

"That's typical. As I see it, the great pessimists are pessimistic, because they are optimists. Seeing what the world is like, they fall into that pessimism that comes from unfounded optimism."

"Okay, but, in your judgement, what are the basic ideas of your father regarding politics now?"

"I believe that fundamentally he still believes in a better world, in communism."

"What kind of communism? Because nowadays to say communism doesn't mean a lot."

"I'm not very interested in politics, so…."

"That's why I'm asking you."

"I believe that communism is the class struggle between the poor and the people in charge. I think it's basically this."

"Yes, justice."

"The greatest good possible for the great majority. I think that's my father's idea."

"Have you worked with him?"

"Yes, on a few films."

"Do you think he takes an idea, say, from a script or does he take an image as his point of departure? To sum up, does he go from the sign to the idea or from the idea to the sign? Does he start with an image and then develop it, or does he have an idea and then pick the images that will supplement the idea?"

"I think that, for him, film is more idea than image. He wants to tell a story, and as he tells the story, the images begin to appear."

"Your idea really interests me, because it's the exact opposite of what your father says. Your father says the images appear and that he goes from one image to another."

"It's possible. He's never talked to me about the origin of his creations, of how his work originates."

"No. I don't think he's talked about it with anybody."

"I see that he first puts together a story that's tightly constructed when he's writing his script, and once the story is written, and he has a strong base, only then does he start making the film, and that's when different contradictions and alternatives begin to emerge. But he always has a story line to start with."

"Fine. I agree with you totally. That doesn't mean, of course, that he'll admit it. I believe he lies to himself when he says that at first an image appears and that he goes from image to image after that."

"Well, sometimes…. For example, I think *Viridiana* did come out of an image. He saw a painting of Saint Viridiana in which she appears with the nails and the other instruments of the Passion. And I think that was the first image or intuition, and that the story came out of that. Afterwards, based on the story, he looked for more specific cinematic images."

"That idea really interests me, but I have a very different one. For me, *Viridiana* comes from his reading of Galdós's *Halma.*

"Maybe."

"In a year, I'll be able to talk to your father about that. Right now, we're still in the midst of surrealism. Not that I think his latest films are less surrealist, but it's a different kind of surrealism."

"I think one of the biggest influences on my father's work is Calanda, the village where

he was born. Not just the drums, the town itself, the people, its aridity, absolutely everything."

"Yes. It's Aragón. Just like in Goya. The issue is whether you believe there's a Spanish influence—and I don't mean in any kind of nationalistic sense—on his work?"

"The Spanish factor is definitive. His good films are the ones that touch on Spanish themes, I believe."

"Which ones do you consider good films?"

"*Viridiana, El ángel exterminador.* A lot of Calanda comes out in the last one, and Teruel and even Cuenca. In *El ángel exterminador,* when they go into the lavatory, and one of them lifts the cover on the big bowl where they do their business and sees an eagle flying down below and some dry leaves whirling in the wind…. Nobody knows what that's about. It happens in the lavatories in Cuenca that are built over the ravines, and when they raise the cover, eagles and doves pass downriver, and sometimes the wind, because some of the valleys are a hundred meters below. I don't know."

"Your father was in Cuenca? For fun? Because he doesn't travel much."

"He doesn't like to travel."

"He usually only travels when he has to."

"Sometimes he travels for pleasure, to Cuenca, or to Las Batuecas, near Portugal, where…"

"Las Hurdes are."

"Sometimes he travels, just for fun, but not often."

"You were born in…?"

"In Paris. In '34."

"Where did you study?"

"For primary school, in New York and Los Angeles; for secondary, in Mexico. I went to college in Oberlin, Ohio."

"I know it very well, because my oldest daughter studied there a few years before you did. And afterward?"

"Afterward, that was all. I wanted to be an agronomist, but—thank God—things didn't work out that way!"

"Like your father. And later on, what have you done?"

"I wasn't interested in film. When I was a kid, going to the studio was horrible, no? The studio is boring if you don't know anything about it. For an eleven or fifteen year-old kid, it's really boring, and afterwards, well…. When I finished college, I didn't know what to do. I had a degree as an English translator, and I didn't know what to do. One day, at a party, with Dancigers, I said as a joke, 'Let me work in film.' He answered, 'Fine. Tomorrow you can start with Orson Welles, as a first assistant.' I said, 'No no, I don't know anything about it. I was joking.' 'You speak English and Spanish, and he needs an assistant. Come on.' And so I started with Orson Welles."

"Here [in Mexico]?"

"Yes. In … *Don Quixote*, which they made here. And afterwards, with Hugo Butler. And I just went on from there."[74]

"It's interesting that both your father's career and yours, too, have had similar starts. Now, you've been making shorts."

"Four of them, but I'm hesitating between film and sculpture."

"I know. I've seen some of them. But the two things aren't opposed; you could do both."

"Who knows. Both careers demand a lot of dedication. When I'm involved in sculpture, I can't think about film. Not at all."

"Fine. But getting back to film, you've made a short about the drums at Calanda."

"I made one on the drums, filmed right there in Calanda. An ugly town. If I say it, they'll throw me out…. A little, dry town."

"How many inhabitants?"

"I think three or four thousand."

"Tell me about your ancestral [*solariega*] home. I put the word in quotes."

"*Solariega*?"

"Yes, the house where you were born…"

"Ah! I was born in Paris, but…."

"No, I mean your family's house, the one in Calanda."

"Ah! You see my Spanish is not so great. The house is in bad shape now. It's falling down, because there's not enough money to repair things. I think that after the Civil War the family lost most of its money, and the house is very sad, very big and very sad, with the paint peeling off and cracks in the walls…."

"Who lives there now?"

"Nobody. My aunt Alicia and her daughters and granddaughters spend their vacations there. I usually go for Holy Week, but I stay at an inn nearby."

"So all that land doesn't belong to the Buñuels anymore?"

"Some of it still belongs to the family. There are olive groves and a farm, but they don't bring any money in. The olive harvest brings enough to pay the workers and pay the taxes, and that's it. So there's not much money in that land. My uncle Alfonso, who died when they were filming *Viridiana,* took care of things a little. He liked the farm and spending time in the country, but since his death, nobody bothers with the land."

"I'd like to go there and take some photos. Calanda is on land that slopes up to the Sierra de Albarracín and to Teruel, isn't it?"

"It's between Teruel and Saragossa. If you want photos, my cousin Pedro Christian has a collection of photos of Calanda, the best you'll find."

"Where is he?"

"He's either in Madrid or in Saragossa. If you write to him…"

"I could go see him."

"Yes. Ask him for the photos, and he'll give you all you want. That photo is his, I think, the one in…"

"The one in Kyrou's book?"

"I think it's Pedro Christian's. He has lots and lots of them. That's why I made the film, because I had all those photos. I showed them to the producer, and then I shot from the same angle. It wasn't very hard."

"Where did you show that film of yours on Calanda?"

"I haven't shown it. They can't sell it."

"Why is that?"

"It's very loud. It's hard to show, because it's so ruthless. The drumsticks beating and the blood on their hands. And, besides, if you show it as a short, the feature film is going

to seem very flat afterwards. It's so brutal, so human and so unforgiving—and the guys with the drums—that it's hard to watch another film after."

"But maybe they could make up a nice program with *Un Chien andalou* and *Calanda.*"

"That would work."

"Or show it after *Nazarín,* almost as a continuation of *Nazarín.*"

"That would be terrific."

"It would, wouldn't it? What films, exactly, did you work on with your father?"

"In *La Fièvre monte à el Pao* and *Nazarín,* I went just to watch. I actually worked on *The Young One*, *Viridiana* and *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*, that's all."

"That's not bad. Which of your father's films do you like best? I don't mean which is best, but which one you like best."

"Well, he's done different sorts of film. I think my favorites are *Viridiana* and *El ángel exterminador.* Well, *L'Âge d'or* too, and *Un Chien andalou*. Yes, those four."

"Are you on the same page [*compenedrado*] with your father when it comes to the daily problems in life?

"What does *compenedrado* mean?"

"It means do you agree with him about modern life as far as the family goes. For example, in social relations?"

"No, I'm not like him. Because of his way of thinking, his social life, his education. We're two different generations. I go out more. I'm more modern in my relationship with my wife. Let's say, for example, that I let my wife work."

"Of course. There's not much Spanish about you, and your father is deeply Spanish, right? He's the typical Spanish husband."

"Yes, and I'm not. As a husband, I'm…. French or American, maybe a little Spanish, a little Mexican, I don't know what. I'm made up of different nationalities."

"And, making films, would you make films like your father's?"

"I think so. I've learned a lot technically from working with him. Ways to save money and effort, for example. I don't like wasting money. With the four shorts I made, everybody was amazed, because I used so little film. I learned it from him. To film what you want and nothing more."

"In other words, to have the finished film in your head?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's a question of technique."

"Yes, but there's a moral side."

"I agree, but we're still talking about professional questions. Your father is a Spanish director, and his influence in film stems from that national, almost visceral, background. Surrealism comes in too. In your case, that doesn't apply."

"What the hell! The children of exiles, like us, have been formed in twenty different places. What is visceral in my father is, in me, a strange mixture of inheritance, preferences, readings that doesn't wind up being that important. You can't live with all that on top of you."

"I understand, totally. My daughters have the same problem. Don't forget that I have three different sons-in-law with three different nationalities living in three different countries."

"There you have it."

"That takes me to a last question. It's about your wife. Your wife has a Jewish background. And, strangely enough, your father's position—which I can almost smell—is an absolutely irrational Spanish position, like so many Spanish things. At heart, without giving it a moment's thought, the Spaniard is an irrational anti–Semite, and he feels that way precisely because he is Semitic. In other words, your paternal family clearly has an Arab strain. You-all may even have Jewish blood. Buñuel and Buñol are place names. For centuries, the Arabs and the Jews were the only people who lived in Aragón. But, like ninety percent of the Spaniards, your father has a certain irrational, historical wariness when it comes to the Jews. Has his position changed since you got married?"

"To tell the truth, I don't know. Because he's always joking, I don't know what his real position is. I think he's more bothered by the fact that she's North American than that she's Jewish. No, it's not exactly that. He doesn't like the way North American women act compared to the way Spanish women act. He must find her frivolous, addicted to the telephone, to going out in the afternoon with her friends and that kind of thing, which isn't acceptable in a Spanish world."

"How about her mini-skirts?"

"They don't bother him."

"Yes, they do."

* * *

Juan Luis Buñuel's exhibition at the Misrachi Gallery. Ingenious constructions made of wires and tin. Amusing, elegant ideas. Good taste. Toys. Sometimes, there's a breath of real art, but revealed off-handedly. Today's mannerism. A very eighteenth-century amusement: the devil, in the plural form. The perfectly normal result of his father's work. Imagination, fantasy, but—here—the total absence of a religious education.

Luis doesn't go to the opening. People bother him, he says.

Ado Kyrou

Adonis Kyrou, a Greek filmmaker, writer and surrealist, lived in Paris and produced one of the earlier books on Buñuel, a mixture of commentary and interviews (1962), that is, as we've seen, marred by misinformation—some possibly passed on by the director himself. He also bought the screenplay of El monje *from Buñuel and made it into a rather ordinary film.*

[They talk about Kyrou's take on surrealism, especially in relation to Buñuel and to the events in Paris in May 1968. Kyrou comments that] "Buñuel was never entirely part of the surrealist group of his time. He was a little on the sidelines. However, Buñuel's spirit was always completely surrealist, whether you're talking about the surrealism of the group or Benjamin Péret's slightly different surrealism. We shouldn't forget Péret's influence on Luis. I'm talking about the spirit that springs not only from his personal universe, but also from his roots in everything that's surrealistic about Spain…."

"The important thing is," Kyrou continues, "that in both Luis's work and the events that took place in May, there were elements not just of social, but also of political, rebel-

lion…." [He describes Luis's excitement over the events of May (without mentioning—or perhaps even being aware—that the director got out of Paris as fast as he could) and then adds] "I don't understand how Luis, with his old anarchist attitude and his great knowledge of anarchism and anarchy, could decide, during the events in May, that the Communist Party was in the right? Do you understand?"[75]

"Absolutely. But first we'd have to establish what matters most to Buñuel: whether it's the libertarian, instinctive sense of anarchism, or the historic, proven capacity of the Communist Parties to mobilize the masses. And then we'd have to throw in the emotional and moral side of his character."

"Exactly. That's the point. Luis's political attitude, as I see it, is sentimental, and that's clear in his films. For example, *El bruto* is a communist film. It's a Marxist analysis that he conjoins, because of his sentimentality, with popular fiction. His attitude toward social problems is always sentimental, always related to the poor…. I believe that he lives with his eyes closed more often than open. I mean that by nature he's more sentimental than reflexive or political. This is my opinion, and it may be because I love him and I try…. He feels in his fingertips a 'tactile' sensitivity to things, and that's what defines him….

"As you know, I was a close friend of Benjamin Péret up until his death. As an adult, he kept on being what he was as a kid. For example, when he was walking down the street and saw a nun, he'd say, 'Come on. Let's go to a hotel so I can make love to you.' I'd argue with him and say, 'How can you, a person who is naturally so kind and gracious, how can you write that we have to kill all the priests and everybody who goes to church?' He always answered that it was a literary attitude. 'It has to be said to put a stop to a terrible evolution even though personally I would never be able to do what I say.' In other words, Péret would describe awful things, the same way that Luis describes them in his films. For example, in *Él*, where terrible tortures are lifted from *La Philosophie dans le boudoir.* It's an attack, an attack on a society and a morality that he doesn't accept…. Let's say, if you agree, that Luis is always settling scores. For example, he can't bear Dalí—it's understandable. In *Cela s'appelle l'aurore*, the most repulsive character in the film has hanging above his desk a reproduction of Dalí's Christ, the one pictured from up above. He's obviously settled a score. There are similar ones in all his films. There's the one with Claudel, and the great settling of scores with the priests who educated him which is a much more complex issue. His attitude is aggressive toward everything that he cannot accept and everything that has made him suffer or could make other people suffer. It's normal…."

…

Aub asks, "Do you see—at least as far as the sentimentality—any relation between Chaplin's way of filming and Buñuel's?"

"Well, obviously they both construct their films in a very characteristic way. Chaplin's construction, like Buñuel's, is usually a question of putting little pieces together, like a puzzle or the parts are even interchangeable. This means that films like *La Voie Lactée, Ensayo de un crimen* or *Subida al cielo* are, I think, just made up of sketches. Having said that, I have to admit that there are also Buñuel films that are beautifully put together: *Él* is one of them. It may be his most solid film from that point of view. It never contradicts itself, never backtracks. In *Viridiana* there are two very different parts, but in *El ángel exterminador,* where you can find little independent gags, all those sketches are so carefully directed that you can't see the framework, and all those gags are part of the film's progression."

"Does the same thing happen with Chaplin?"

"Yes, depending on the film. But isn't that the very stuff of film and of the great filmmakers? Don't forget that when Buñuel didn't work freely, when he gave in, want to or not, to the pressures of commerce in Mexico, what he did in those films was introduce little sequences that he liked. We see whole films that are constructed of such long takes that they demand the kind of little sequence he likes [like the scene in *La ilusión viaja en tranvia* (*Illusion Travels by Streetcar*), when the butchers get on with sides of meat and when the two little old ladies get on carrying the miraculous statue of the Virgin]. He got that trick from other filmmakers. Sternberg does the same thing exactly. And when Buñuel finally begins to feel as free as he did during days of *L'Âge d'or* that's when he reduces the films to a series of gags and rejects the part he doesn't like: the storyline, and that's how he winds up with *La Voie Lactée* … which consists of separate pieces. That's why I say that, to my mind, his most accomplished film is *El ángel exterminador,* because the pieces, the gags, are there, but they are so perfectly integrated that there is a definite progression. I know Buñuel laughs at the idea of technique, but sometimes it just slips out, and we see that he dominates the technique even if he doesn't want to admit it. The way he directs so many different characters in *El ángel exterminador* without ever confusing the spectator is just amazing, impressive….

"Film, for Luis, is a big laugh. He likes to shout and to laugh; it's his way of amusing people, and he does it in film the same way he does it in life…. Sometimes the audience doesn't see that big Homeric laugh. You know that a lot of times there are gags in his films that are so personal almost nobody gets them…. I'll give you an example. Before I'd seen *La Voie Lactée,* he told me, 'You'll see: there's a scene that's very funny, very comic. I laugh every time I see it. It's the scene with the miracle of the Virgin.' For Luis it's an amazing scene because it's pure Saint-Sulpice [i.e., typical of the sentimental tourist souvenirs sold near that popular church in Paris], and that really tickles him. But when I saw the film, among an audience that didn't share Luis's attitude toward the Jesuits, there wasn't a single laugh at that sequence. The majority of the spectators took it seriously. But that's part of Luis's filmmaking. You can't complain about it, because that's what makes his films."

"Yes," Aub agrees. "He himself says, 'I hate Christ, but I adore the Virgin Mary.' Then he adds, 'Of course, neither thing is true, but the reverse is also untrue.' He doesn't hate Christ, nor does he love the Virgin Mary."

"Imagine, one day I really pushed him—I don't know if you can publish this—and I asked him, 'What's this attraction for the Virgin Mary about?' And he explained that when he was a boy, when he studied with the priests at school, the priests went on so about the Virgin that the boys would kneel in front of her image to masturbate. In their eyes, the Virgin wound up being a beautiful woman."

"He absolutely denies that story. He says it's totally untrue."

"But he's the one who told me!"

"Well, he says it's not true. Just the contrary. He says the life they led at school was extremely pure. It shows that Luis likes to make up stories and then deny them, betraying even his closest friends. He makes up stories for fun. That trick is particularly Spanish and, even more particularly, Aragonese."

"So! He took me in!"

…

Salvador and Ana María Dalí

Salvador and Buñuel collaborated closely on the screenplay for Un Chien andalou, *starting with an idea of Salvador's, written on a shoe box. Although they did not work as closely together on* L'Âge d'or*—by that time Gala had come onto the scene—Dalí contributed much more to the screenplay than Buñuel liked to admit, as Dalí's many letters containing suggestions attest. Buñuel took off for America before the public showing of* L'Âge, *leaving Salvador, more or less, holding the bag, then later cut him out of the credits; however, they made up enough to see each other repeatedly in New York (see various interviews) until Dalí published* My Secret Life *in English (1942), where he accuses Buñuel of being an atheist and a Stalinist (both true enough), thus contributing to the director's loss of his position in New York.*

Ana María, Salvador's sister, remained in Catalonia, feeding her hatred of Gala and resentment of whatever forces she believed had destroyed her brother.

I talk to Dalí on the phone.

"Come tomorrow. At seven. Long live the king! Long live don Juan Carlos!"

"Long life to whomever you like, but I didn't expect to hear subversive cries from you."

"We owe him everything."

"I don't have any debts."

I hang up.

[There is a long evocation of the Cabo de Creus and Cadaqués, the rocky coast north of Barcelona where much of *L'Âge d'or* was filmed and where Dalí, his wife Gala and his sister Ana María continue to live.]

We go to Dalí's house. Inside, you go up and down pointlessly through an odd series of labyrinthine gardens, as useless as those enormous ostrich eggs that he has planted as though they were *tinacos,* which is what we call water deposits in Mexico. We go down some narrow corridors and suddenly, in a turn in the passageway, in a tiny room, seated behind a u-shaped desk is Salvador, dressed as an admiral, with a ruff, lots of showy medals and a silver crown, immaculate, with a normal sized mustache that's turned up and waxed, as everybody knows. Everything is starched: his tie, his shirtfront, his voice. Around the table are about a dozen people who have come to see the spectacle. The moment he sees me, he abandons them. He makes me sit by his side and introduces me, "People, this is Max Aub."

And we start speaking in Catalonian, without paying any attention to the others. There is a feeling, which he doesn't hide, that it's all a game, that he's doing his number. He withdraws, returns to the stage, greets people as if he were any old clown.

"We owe everything to the king, our lord."

His varnished moustache. I thought he'd look older. He's aged well. The poor French and English and Americans who are looking at him don't know what it's all about. He imitates the Picasso of thirty years back. And he overacts, knowing exactly where he's going to wind up. He doesn't wind up. The horseplay gets even more exaggerated with the arrival of a team from Radio Andorra.

He makes a point of working. He gesticulates.

"First, the contract. Tomorrow at one. Have a glass of champagne before you leave."

Champagne. He doesn't drink. It's an excellent bubbly wine from Perelada. I see this man as sad and lost.

"I want everyone to speak about Dalí. Badly, if possible. Well, if they can't help it."

The subject of Buñuel comes up.

"I sent him a telegram. I wanted to make a sequel to *Un Chien andalou*, but he refused."

"I tell him what I know about the text of his message.

"No, no. That part about kissing on the lips wasn't in it."

Buñuel told me, and I don't have any reason to doubt him, that Dalí's telegram asking him to come to Cadaqués or to meet up in Madrid, ended saying, "I kiss you on the lips."

"And you can publish everything I tell you. Everything you want to. What did you think of Cadaqués?"

"I already knew that nobody could understand your painting without first seeing Cadaqués and Cabo de Creus. You're a surrealist painter from the Ampurdán. Surrealist because these rocks are surreal."

He agrees with me. I suppose just because. We go out together, but not until he has referred to the people from Radio Andorra as being from Radio Luxemburg. Intentionally, of course, so they will hear him. He knows they are competitors.

He keeps me company to show them where they stand. In the garden, we speak for only a few minutes.

"Look, the biggest difference between Buñuel and me is that he studied with the Jesuits and I with the Christian Brothers. My family didn't have the kind of money his had."

"And Federico's too, right?"

"Federico?"

Perhaps this memory has played a role throughout his life, and Gala found fertile ground to nourish his eagerness to make money.

"Garfías, another poor boy."

"He was a genius."

"There's just no end to the dead."

"What became of Gustavo Durán?"

I tell him while we walk around the garden. Gala is waiting at the door.

"You're in better shape than Salvador," she tells me.

"*C'est la seule chose qui manquait encore a vos cochonneries*." [That was the only thing missing from your dirty deeds, Aub thinks to himself.]

She is icy. A guillotine. I don't think I've ever seen her except in paintings. Dalí doesn't pay her any mind, but she created *this* Dalí, just as Aragon created Elsa. There was another, earlier Dalí. Federico's and Luis Buñuel's. He knows it; he is sorry about it, but there's no going back. Unassuming and full of talent. Intelligent and perfectly aware of what he was doing, he cultivated a pompier style, intentionally vulgar and replete with bad taste, a little like Ramón [Gómez de la Serna], a little like Buñuel, Gaudí or Rusiñol.[76] People like him, but not because of his eccentricities. An atheist, and extremely deferential to those in power, he appeals especially to a bourgeoisie that adores his Christs and his Last Suppers.

He doesn't fool anyone except himself, but that doesn't show in his bank accounts. He lies with the best of them, with an aplomb that is a pleasure to hear. He despises himself, just as he probably despises everyone else. Gala meant everything to him when she took his "maidenhead," making him feel like a real man, but he never managed to engender anything better than what he had painted in the company of his sister or of Federico. What brought him and Buñuel together was a desire to destroy the world around them. Gala

made him take a step back and chained him to the chariot of the conquerors, a slave. He became a buffoon, a parody of himself.

Perhaps you think I'm speaking badly of him. I'm not. If you read him, you'll understand. It's not that he failed; he had nothing left to offer. His bad taste was inborn; it lay deep in the marrow of his bones, and no Gala could cure that. He's an odd mixture of genius and absurdity. The photograph of him shaking hands with our supreme commander is no surprise. They're two of a kind. He could never have reached an understanding with Hitler or Mussolini, but with Franco, yes. His pompier, academic style needs a certain quantity of hypocrisy, of bravado, of false erudition, of suppositions and myths, queer mannerisms, kiss-assery that fits perfectly with what he is. Gala just added the final touch.

"We'll see each other tomorrow, on our own. Come after dinner. While I'm painting, I'll record as much as you like."

…

Ana María Dalí

…

Ana María or the anti-surrealist fury. Sixty something, fine looking (the term is apt here). Still in the fullness of her anger.

…

"I despise [the surrealists] because they did everything they could to destroy the family, religion, the nation. I can accept that attitude from people who really believe what they say and who know they are risking their lives for it. But the ones who are all talk, who are sure nothing will happen to them…. And the worst part is that my brother wasn't a surrealist. He had nothing of the surrealist about him. It was their fault, their fault…."

Who are "they"? Buñuel? No. The friends from Paris? I'm not sure she's talking about them either. Gala?

"Luis Buñuel gave me a lighter"—it was actually a powder case with a mirror—"and a blue necklace. I still have them on my dressing table. You can't imagine how Luis worked! Like a dog. He's a great worker. He used to say, 'When I finish so many pages, I'll smoke a Lucky.' And he did it. He wrote *Un Chien andalou.*"

"They were surrealists without realizing it."

"Exactly. They worked with great enthusiasm. I've never seen him again. Because of what happened later on, there was no question of seeing him, and I don't want to remember things that are best forgotten…."

For the rest of the interview, she inveighs against Gala and her insidious influence on Salvador.

Salvador Dalí—15 August 1969

I've been in Spain for three days now, and no one, no one, has said a single word even remotely related to the Civil War. They're in the opposition—opium of the democracies—and everybody is happy. The anarchists….

"I've always been an anarchist."

"Weren't you a monarchist yesterday?"

"Of course. I always am. The two opposites at the same time."

"And atheist?"

"That's all that was missing!"

"Then, what about your religious paintings?"

He shrugs his shoulders and smiles. We look at a reproduction of his Christ without the nails, and at his portrait of Gala as the Virgin Mary.

"That's about as blasphemous as you can get. Except for Buñuel in *La Voie Lactée.*"

"You haven't seen *Simón del desierto,*" Aub points out.

He shows me a sketch for a painting with the atom bomb exploding in the Vatican.

"They destroyed themselves. Only St. Cecilia will be left … music."

"Wagner."

"Of course."

…

Dalí goes on, "As the world becomes more scientific, more rational, art is going in the other direction, turning its back on reason. It's inevitable. You can only fish for monsters in a quiet sea. When a north wind blows, as it is now, nobody goes fishing."

"You take refuge in a safe harbor."

"There's more: when the world is threatened with death, as it is now, it needs an aesthetic like surrealism in order to escape. Years ago, the diffusion of art was limited to an audience of rich, old farts. Now, reproductions are the real life of a work of art."

"You've become a creator of consumer goods."

"Exactly. The king of painting…"

"Of slick painting."

"Slick and affected. See how I paint? Whorling the brush again and again over the same place until I get the tone I want. I do it naturally as if my hand were leading me."

"The king of sub-products of art. The king of prayer cards. The king of Málaga raisins. The king of cigars."

"It would have to be the king of cigar bands and of the fancy boxes Málaga raisins come in. The king of decorative painting."

"And jewelry maker to His Majesty."

"You won't believe me, but sometimes I think about putting in my paintings, like they did on *fin de siècle* products, "By appointment to Their Majesties."

"In the long run, your limp watches are just an external sign of your impotence. You don't have to read Freud or Jung to realize that you don't give the right time."

He's quiet for a moment. Then he reacts, "It's not the first time they've told me that, and it's true."

"Buñuel's films never give that impression."

"The feathers, the shoes…."

"The feathers…. Well, they're from 1928 [*sic*], and you both were living in a country of masturbators, at least, you were. At that time, you'd never had relations with a woman. Buñuel had a letter from you in which you told him, amazingly amazed, about your 'deflowering' at the hands—well, that's just an expression—of Gala, and about your astonishment. Of course! That miracle no human being had experienced before was created expressly for your delight. It was reserved for Salvador Dalí."

"Of course."

He almost makes me sad. That constant petulance, that continuous search for whatever piece—or stone—can serve as his monument. He's fetid, like a corpse. Here in front of me he's both dead and alive. I picture him in a coffin, filled with moth balls, playing with them, inviolable atoms. It's sad to see him as though he were embalmed; drawing the attention of mediocre minds with a facility that is shocking when you remember that he could really have been something.

"How do you see Spain now. I ask you, because it's what everybody asks me. Maybe your answer will help me."

"As I'm a personal enemy of liberty, since liberty makes me want to vomit, Spain seems like the ideal place to live, because there's no liberty in Spain. There's no other country like Spain. My mother, who was one of those poor women who are true believers, who had an uncritical belief in goodness, in good will, in justice, in charity, in respect for our elders and for authority; one of those women who will wear the same suit for months, not out of laziness, not because they have no other clothes, but because they think it doesn't matter, that what's appropriate to wear in the daytime is good for the evening as well, that the good fabric in the chest could always be sold, who believe in fidelity and honor and that the person who lacks those qualities has committed a mortal offense. My mother also believed as I do: that no country can compare to ours."

"Don't you have a sense of remorse?"

"I? Lautréamont already knew that nothing on this earth makes any sense, that absurdity and disgust are condiments that provoke men and impel them to look for other options. They forced me out of the surrealist group on the grounds that I was an enemy of the proletariat. André Breton insisted that I sign a document avowing that I was not in any way an enemy of the proletariat. I agreed to do it with great satisfaction. As I see it, Karl Marx was wrong. We can now witness the desperation of class warfare thanks to cybernetic machines and modern technology. The ruling class has become the most important. We'll soon be part of era in which there is no proletariat."

"You're up to date on things."

Dalí works and plays constantly. He does exactly the same thing when he's painting.

"I never paint seriously. I play. Drawing is different, but painting. Why bother? Velázquez has already done it. Picasso plays as well, but he doesn't have as much fun as I do. I paint for the proletariat, and he paints for the snobs."

"Why are you lying?"

"Because there's no truth except in lies, and no painting except the slickest. Every canvas is a huge ass, and I'm the greatest ass-licker in the history of painting. Deception is essential. What the French call *trompe l'oeil* is the culmination of painting. The snout of the eye.[77]

"You're right: the snout or trunk of the eye amounts to a 'dick,' the dick of the eye. The trick of the eye. Do you think everyone falls for that trick?"

"Sooner or later."

"The awful thing is that you keep repeating what you've already said. You tell everybody the same thing: that you're immortal, that if you ever got the idea that you'd die one day, you'd die of shock. That you have no faith."

"I always tell the truth."

"They're harebrained ideas. Don't you realize that, because you don't believe, your religious paintings are as blasphemous as Buñuel's films?"

"I am sure that Buñuel would never say he'd made a blasphemous film, not even one scene. In the final analysis, we've both taken the same path: I've followed Franco and the King; he's followed Stalin. There's not a big difference. I recognize that the Apostolic, Catholic and Roman Church is right as far as the immortality of man goes. My past, my family, my father who was a notary and an atheist, all that kept me from being a believer. Without that faith, I accept the triumphs of science that will save me from death. I suffer as Pascal did.[78] I am a traitor and a coward. Luis is just a coward, but he's a bigger coward than I am. It's a great virtue, because it makes a person suffer…."

…

"In 1931 you created an 'object with a symbolic function,' based on shoes. In your interviews with Alain Bosquet, when he asked: 'If you were obliged to worship an every-day object as a relic, what would you choose?' You answered, 'Shoes.' It's interesting, because that 'object with a symbolic function'—or not so symbolic, as I see it—is one of Buñuel's obsessions. There are shoes in all his films, from the ones you made together up to the ones when you were most separated. It's odd that you share those identical roots."

…

31 August 1969

"In 1942, in one of your books, you spoke very badly about *L'Âge d'or.*"

"I never spoke badly about *L'Âge d'or.* What happened is that I disagreed with Buñuel, because he gave way to the pressure of the French Communists and changed the name of the film, but I always thought *L'Âge d'or* was a very good film.[79] I like it a lot, but not so much as *Un Chien andalou,* because *Un Chien andalou* is a better film."

"You never spoke out against *L'Âge d'or*?"

"Never, ever. There was only an argument about the title change, which Buñuel did without consulting me, and I thought that was really outrageous."

"Yes, but you said that you did not agree with the religious things in it."

"It was just the other way around. I liked everything that was sacrilegious. Because I'm an Apostolic and Roman Catholic, I find sacrilege very interesting. It was Buñuel who suppressed all of that at the instigation of the French Communists, who were very strong believers in Joan of Arc and were becoming more and more bourgeois. But I've never been opposed to *L'Âge d'or.*"

"Fine. So, why aren't you friends anymore?"

"Oh, no! I am a friend of his. I'm everybody's friend. It's the others who aren't always my friends. I'm a friend of Buñuel's. I sent him a telegram a few months ago. I have absolutely nothing against him. One time I gave a talk on Mexican television, saying that he was an amazing character. But I say Dalinian things about him, as I do about everybody. As everybody knows, he's become deaf, and he's become deaf because of that hard-headed Aragonese side of him that means he never wants to listen to anything people tell him. It's the same thing that happened to Goya, who wasn't exactly from Calanda, but from somewhere around there. It's the prototype of the Aragonese who doesn't want to listen to anybody and ends up deaf as a wall."

"Beethoven…."

"I was the first one to compare him to Beethoven. A lot of what we say about Buñuel comes from me."

"For example."

"*Un Chien andalou*. Luis wanted to make a film along Gómez de la Serna lines. There'd be a newspaper and so on and so forth. I told him, 'Don't do that, because if you've got money from your mother … [you can do better].' I wrote, on a shoe box, *Un Chien*. After that, we spent a week talking about it and really collaborating, because there are some really good things that he added, but the essential ideas came from Dalí. That's not the case in *L'Âge*."

"I already know. Buñuel himself tells the same story, except…."

"What comes from one of us or the other…."

"There's one thing I'm really interested in, and it's this: he says that you started telling each other your dreams and that the dream about the eye refers to his mother. Is that true or not?"

"Yes, very possibly, because at that time we were in total agreement, and it's certainly possible that the eye came from him. I can't really tell now what came from him or from me, because it was a perfect collaboration. Often one person was about to say something, and the other would actually say it. It was really…."

"And he says that your dreams are also in it."

"I don't really remember now, but the basic idea was that he'd come to Figueras to work on something that I wrote in half a minute, and the next day he actually came."

"Your friendship with Buñuel comes from the Residencia."

"From the Residencia de Estudiantes, yes."

"But you got to the Residencia fairly late. He had been there since…."

"He was already there. I got there looking like a 'hippy,' with long hair, and I didn't know anybody. I was timid, and Buñuel and García Lorca started telling people, 'There's a strange Polish painter here, and we should talk to him,' because I was probably the only person in Madrid who was painting Cubist works at that point. A Polish painter! And so they took me up; they got me to meet people, and suddenly I had lots of prestige in that group."

"Everybody who met you then remembers that you used to draw exactly as if you were in the middle of a dream, that you filled your room with sheets of paper and then threw them away, that you drew and threw away what you drew and that you started to draw athletes. What happened to them? Do you remember?"

"Out of everything I did in the Residencia at that time, the only thing that survived is a painting García Lorca's family has, a metaphysical painting. I destroyed everything else."

"The drawings too?"

"None of that is left."

"It's a shame."

"I was very careless. I tore them up. I threw them away. I crumpled them up. I didn't take them seriously, but—now that we're looking back—maybe you should see a painter who lent me his studio on the Calle de la Sierpe. Sigfrido Burmann, a German I met here in Cadaqués. Do you know him?"

"Yes, of course."

"He lent me his studio in Madrid. That's where I did my Cubist stuff. There was a gypsy girl who served as a model. She was here in Cadaqués recently."

"How about your relationship with Federico?"

"Ah! Well, like everybody knows, Federico was in love with me, and he tried to fuck me in the ass two times, but since I'm not queer and it really hurt, I put an end to that right away, and our friendship became purely platonic. We admired each other. He wrote his ode … his 'Oda a Salvador Dalí.'"

"Wasn't Federico jealous of your friendship with Buñuel?"

"Federico was the most jealous person in the world. He was especially jealous of Alberti. If somebody said casually, 'Alberti (or anybody else) has written something really nice,' he would turn pale, go absolutely white, and then after a minute, 'I'm bored. My throat hurts. I'm going to bed.' It was a question of jealousy. At the beginning, we'd say, 'Federico, what's wrong? Take an aspirin.' Later, when we realized it was sheer jealousy, we turned cruel, because he'd say, 'I'm bored; I'm going home,' we'd answer, 'Fine. See you tomorrow. Good night.' Then he'd really suffer and do everything he could to find out where we were going. He couldn't help himself: he had to find the group again. He was jealous of everybody. It was awful. With Rafael Alberti, it was a question of literary jealousy, because he knew of course that Alberti was truly talented, and that drove him crazy. He wanted to be the best, the only one."

"You liked Federico's theater. Once, when Buñuel had just come in from Saragossa, you-all took him to the basement of the Hotel Nacional to hear…. I don't remember if it was *Los cuernos de don Friolera* ['Don Friolera's Horns'] or *Don Perlimplín*. [*Los cuernos* was actually by Valle-Inclán.] Suddenly, at the end of the first act, Luis got up and said, 'This is really bad.' And you, who had praised Federico's piece to the high heavens, joined Buñuel and told poor Federico the same thing, 'This is really bad.' Then you and Buñuel took off walking along the Paseo del Prado, and Federico followed behind, very crestfallen. Do you remember that?"

"Yes, vaguely. But what I remember very clearly—I don't know if you've heard about it—is the letter of insults we sent Juan Ramón Jiménez."

"Yes, but tell me about it yourself."

"At that time, we wanted to send a letter to the most prestigious person in Spain, solely with the idea of creating a kind of spiritual subversion, of provoking a reaction so that people would say, 'Why have they done that?' and so on. We had chosen two or three people. We'd thought about Falla, who was renown, about telling him that he was a son of a bitch and so on, the worst things we could think of. We put the names in a hat, and Juan Ramón Jiménez came out. We had just visited Juan Ramón the day before. He had received us warmly, 'Ah, these wonderful young people,' and he said he had met some magnificent young men in our group. So, he comes out of the hat, and we wrote him the letter, which was a terrible letter attacking his *Platero* [*Platero y yo, Platero and I,* an extremely popular prose piece about the simple life] saying that donkey Platero was a real jackass and that the business about the stars was a piece of disgusting sentimentality…. And it's true. I've never liked Juan Ramón Jiménez. He's an awful poet. Just as we were putting the letter in the mail, Buñuel had a moment of doubt, but he did it, we did it. The next day, Juan Ramón was sick, saying, 'I don't understand. The day before these boys come to my house; they

seem … and the next day they insult me in the rudest way imaginable.' He never understood it. It was incomprehensible. I did it with Luis Buñuel, signed by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí. A letter full of insults. I don't remember exactly what we said, but we used the grossest, most insulting words we could come up with; they couldn't possibly have been any more hateful."

"What year was that?"

"I don't know. I don't have any idea. Buñuel remembers these things much more clearly than I do."

"Yes, and he's told me the story. I knew about the letter. For some time, you were—it must have been during your frustrated relationship with Federico—and Buñuel came one night—who knows why?—and threw a bucket of water under the door of the room where you-all were sleeping. Don't you remember?"

"No, but it could have happened, because at that point we'd created a kind of camp site in our room. We had made a cabin with our sheets, a kind of tent for camping out. We went to the shower in search of water, and we opened cans of sardines. We were living like hippies, but inside our room. And at that time, Buñuel was on the scene, busy, doing things of that sort, throwing water at us and so on. Once he threw a javelin at a guy that almost killed him. In short, every day Buñuel did something odd, something violent."

…

"Changing subjects, what was your family's reaction when you became a surrealist?"

"*Hombre*! At that time I'd already written on an image of the Sacred Heart an inscription that read: 'Sometimes, just for fun, on Sundays, I dream that I'm spitting on the portrait of my mother.' My father found it. He didn't understand it. Just the opposite. Now I've begun to discover that spitting is sacred. In many religions, the first thing you do is spit on the beloved image. More than that, in dreams, in Freud, you murder the person you love best, you fuck them in the ass, you attack them in all sorts of bad ways.

"Thinking along these lines, I'll tell you a similar story about Buñuel, who was obsessed with the convents of Toledo. He adored them. And he used to go every night to listen to the nuns chanting there. There was a little Virgin he liked a lot. One time, in front of this Virgin, he was moved almost to tears. He started to utter a sort of prayer, and then suddenly, without a pause, he spit on her and started to insult her. That is, he passed from one emotion to the other as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

"But [the incident about my mother] isn't why my family sent me packing. It was because of Gala. I was already living with Gala. I had met her with the surrealist group, and my father said to my mother, 'The way to get this boy to behave is to throw him out of the house, and since he doesn't know how to pay for a taxi, or buy a ticket to the movies or anything else (because I didn't know the value of money or how to pay for things), then a week later he'll come back from Paris, covered with lice, to ask forgiveness, and this business will be taken care of.' I didn't return. I only returned after I'd been to New York and was driving a Cadillac."

"You owe her everything."

"Yes. Without Gala—Buñuel knows—I had some terrible crises of laughter, I was nearly mad. Gala gave my madness a classical meaning, and she transformed it into a sense of critical paranoia."

"Which you have always defended."

"It's my answer to the surrealists' automatism."

"You had a decisive influence on Breton in the third period of surrealism."

"That's why they threw me out. They threw me out, because they said I was a fan of Hitler. It's not that I admired Hitler, but Hitler seemed much more surrealist than the surrealists, because he pushed irrationality to the limit. Wagner, too, was a completely surrealist."

"Buñuel liked Wagner too."

"Of course. We both did, but if Buñuel liked Wagner, and I liked Wagner, the one who liked Wagner the most was Hitler, who met his end in what could have been a Wagnerian tragedy, with the Russian tanks, with Eva Braun, with the flames, which is exactly what he wanted, because: What would Hitler have done if he had won the war? No! He had to finish up in a catastrophic, romantic way and, more than that, since he was a masochist, he did everything he could to lose, but he didn't want to give up; he wanted them to beat him. That's why he fucked us up for so long, because he didn't want to pretend. He wanted to lose, but only if he were actually beaten."

"Is it true that in 1937, when Picasso painted *Guernica,* you offered to make another painting for the Spanish pavilion?"

"Yes. It's true, because at that point I wanted to put the communists to the test, and since I had a Republican passport, there was no reason for them to keep me from painting a work for the pavilion, but I knew they wouldn't accept it, because all the Party people were there, and they knew what I thought, but if they had really been what they said they were, unprejudiced and so on, they would have let me put a piece in the pavilion. It didn't work. I knew it wouldn't work, but I asked to paint a piece for the pavilion of the Spanish Republic, that was my legitimate government, and they refused. It was a terrible thing. I don't know what position Buñuel took, but Sert and all of them said they wouldn't even consider it."

"Have you see Buñuel's last films?"

"Not all of them, but I've seen *La Voie Lactée* and liked it a lot. And *Viridiana,* which is very good."

"How about *Los olvidados*?"

"I didn't like it as much, because it wasn't really violent. He wanted to strike a blow, but he didn't. It was a little impotent, like me. I think every artist is probably a little impotent, and you can see that in Buñuel's films. But what really interests me in Buñuel is his obsession with religion. It's obvious. He said recently…. I don't know if it's true, but I heard it from an actor in *La Voie Lactée*, Laurent Terzieff, a Russian who plays one of the pilgrims, a good actor. According to Terzieff, Buñuel told him that when he felt close to death he'd call for a priest, but then he added, 'No one will ever know if I did it seriously or as a joke.'"

"How about you? Will you do it seriously or as a joke?"

"I've already done it seriously, when I had appendicitis in New York. I asked for two things: a notary and a priest. Gala was desperate, because I already had peritonitis, and she didn't want…. The priest couldn't come, and neither could the notary. They went on and operated on me, because it was urgent, but I really wanted both of them."

"What did you want them for?"

"One of them for the business with the will, so that Gala would be … so that everything would be exactly like I want, and the other, so I could make my confession even though

I'm not a believer, because I am, I still am…. I need it. It's odd. Because of people who have been believers, like Pascal, amazing people, much smarter than I am, I'm sure that the Catholic faith is the best of all and that the soul is immortal and all that. I believe it in theory, but I'm just not a believer. At heart, I have doubts about it. I'm almost sure that there's nothing after death, because of my training as an atheist, my parents, my anarchist culture and so on. That is, in theory, reason tells me that's how it has to be, but at heart I'm afraid it's not true. And yet, when the moment comes, I'll do whatever has to be done, just in case."

"That's Pascal. So your religious paintings have a double value, because they're exclusively a product of your reason."

"Just that. I'm not talking about faith. I don't have any faith. I would like to have it, but no, I don't. It's something you can't just…"

"Invent."

"It has to come or not. Now, the truth is I've never believed I'm going to die. If I believed that I was going to die, I'd start shaking like a leaf. I'd be terrified. I'm sure that at the end something has to be worked out: faith comes, and it's all taken care of, or my life is prolonged for fifty more years, or hibernation…. I can't admit that I'll completely disappear."

"I think Buñuel is close to your ideas on that subject."

"I'd love to see him again. I don't have anything … but I've asked friends, and I know that he really doesn't want to. I don't want to insist on it, to take him by surprise. But I don't have anything, nothing at all [against him] … just the opposite."

"On the question of a future life you think the same thing Buñuel thinks. Could you do the same as Pedro Salinas?"

"What did he do?"

"He said, 'I don't believe, but I'm going to die like a Spanish gentleman.' And he called for a priest."

"Picasso said recently that when he dies he wants to be buried in the Catholic cemetery, like his ancestors, but not because he believes in anything. He's like Salinas. In short, it's almost the same thing. We're too interested in what will happen. Either we burn down cathedrals or we build cathedrals. There's no middle ground. We commit blasphemy, or we accept our faith. The middle way, the French way, that's not for the Spaniards."

…

"Ah! Another interesting thing about Buñuel" [Dalí continues]. "He told me once, 'The most disgusting thing of all is the emotion we feel about stupid things. For example, we're in a café, on the calle de Alcalá, and the army goes marching by with all its braggadocio, or you hear the national anthem. I hate it, but just at that moment, I'm terribly moved by it all. I even feel a chill.' He rebelled against that chill, but that's the feeling for our country that everybody experiences, no matter who you are. Even I…. We're in America, and I could care less about America, but people stand up for the national anthem…. It's that thing, that shiver, the shiver when we think of Santiago [the patron saint of Spain]."

"Listen, you said earlier that you're impotent and that Buñuel is too."

"I am. Not as much as I pretend, but I think all the great creators are impotent. Hitler was. In other words, the man who creates children, who always has sperm enough to create children, to fuck, well, that's what he does, and that's it, but when the sexual thing doesn't

function as well as it should, then you have to sublimate it in philosophy or art or war or in something else. Buñuel has shown he's not all that impotent, because he has sons."

"Yes, two of them."

"So, maybe not. But he must have some kind of complex, because that's clear in his films. In his films, you see impulses, but when the moment comes to realize them, they fizzle out. In *Los olvidados,* something is always on the point of happening, but it never does. In other words, things are always half done. In all his films, there's a great drive forward, and then it goes nowhere."

"Does the same thing happen in your paintings?"

"It always happens in my paintings. Every year I work on a painting that I think is going to be brilliant, and at the end I see it's a piece of shit and then when I'm sending it off, I see what I should have done, but it's too late…. But it's wonderful, because it gives me a reason to keep on living. The day I paint a picture like *Las meninas* or *Las lanzas* [*The Maids of Honor* or *The Lances: The Surrender of Breda*—both by Velázquez], or something like Vermeer, then there'd be nothing left but to die."

…

"[Buñuel] was obsessed with Spanish things, especially that Christmas celebration [Holy Week, actually] in Calanda with the drums. I remember when we were in Los Angeles we had supper together once, and all he could talk about was going back to Calanda. That obsession with the drums that echo off each other…. He associates them with Beethoven … and with his deafness, because he has said that sometimes the sound of the drums is deafening."

…

"Do you think Buñuel belonged to the Party?"

"I don't think so. He's hard-headed, like everybody from Calanda."

"Right."

"Since he's said that he is, then he'll stick with it 'til the end. That would be typical of him."

"So we can say he's a communist, because he's an ass."

"No, no, no. There's nothing dumb about him. It's because he's as stubborn as a mule. I think that's what it is. He can't, he refuses, to admit that he's made a mistake. He'd never do it in an argument. A lot of us changed our minds about things. In arguments, he never did. When he starts an argument, he has a point of view, and he never changes it. That's typical of him. It's his strong point. Without it, he would never have done what he's done. It works for him. He won't change his mind. It's an amazing case."

"But, in his films…."

"Oh, that's different. He changes his mind in his films; he thinks things over, but as to ideological questions … never!"

"I've talked about film with him, and I've never been able to make him change his mind. At most, I might get him to accept something he hadn't thought of before, but nobody can make him change his ideas."

"No, no, it's impossible."

"But he'll accept something from you, a suggestion, a new idea…."

"Yes, and he'll accept changes, but what he has said, that won't change."

"And, moreover, he winds up believing that the ideas you've given him, the ones he agrees about, are his."

"That's typical. He's Aragonese, terribly Aragonese. It's a prototype."

"I'm going to Calanda, to see what it is about that land. I'm going to analyze it."

"You've never been?"

"No."

"Ah!"

…

"How's his health? … A lot of people say that his deafness, that he puts it on so that…."

"No. Not at all. He has three problems with his ears: a little of Ménière's Syndrome…"

"Fainting spells."

"And two other things. What people say just isn't true. He's deaf, but there are days when his hearing is better. If he's with three people, he doesn't hear, because he can't distinguish between the different tones. He loved music so much, and now he can't distinguish one instrument from another."

"And his wife is still…?"

"She's fine. Jeanne, she hasn't changed."

"He really loved her."

"Where did you meet Jeanne?"

"In Paris. And what do the sons do?"

"One of them has just had an exhibition."

"Isn't one of them an architect?"

"No. One used to be a filmmaker. He made a film about Calanda, and he's a sculptor now. The other, Rafael, writes. They all travel."

* * *

…

"Breton called me 'Avida Dollars.' He always understood me very well. Buñuel did too. Buñuel is a communist. That's why he doesn't want to see me, but I'm sure he's dying to spend time with me although we couldn't get drunk like we used to in New York, when he recognized that García Lorca was an old-fashioned pederast, something that I just couldn't tell him. I love Luis although he's treated me pretty badly. He despises Gala. He became a communist, and then he repented. At heart, what he hates are the Marist Brothers, because he studied with the Jesuits. He's much more Catholic than I am. When I suggested we make a sequel to *Un Chien,* he answered, 'That's water under the bridge.' I'd be a fool to believe him. Of course not. Buñuel is a very academic director. Did you see *Belle de Jour*? It's a really pompier film. That's why I like it. I also like *Simón del desierto* and *La Voie Lactée,* because they're blasphemous and anti–Catholic. I adore blasphemy. It's the best demonstration of the existence of God, in whom I wish I could believe. I'm not blasphemous. It wouldn't help my interests. Buñuel is. He's the great blasphemer of our time, just as Saint Paul and Saint Agustin were. It wouldn't surprise me if one day they canonized Buñuel. Saint Luis Buñuel. He already has a street named after him in Calanda, right by the church. You have to start somewhere. Basically, Luis and I understand each other very well, because I'm an anarchist and a Stalinist, like him. Luis and I are the great Stalinist anarchists of our time. Perhaps a little Maoist too, but we'd have to talk about that to reach an agreement. And he doesn't want to. I've spoken often about the hammer and sickle, which are—it's well known—very obvious sexual images."

[The conversation continues along the same lines. After claiming to be many things, Dalí suddenly admits, "To be truthful, what I am is a very bad painter who charges more for his paintings than anybody else. I'm the most popular painter in the world. Nobody else has sold more reproductions of his paintings than I." After that, he returns to his usual patter.]

Federico Amérigo

13 March 1969

Federico Amérigo, a former boarder at the Residencia and part of the colony of Spanish exiles in Mexico, was a production manager and producer. He was involved in six of Buñuel's films.[80]

"There comes a point in *El gran calavera* when Fernando Soler tells me, 'Federico, I've agreed to make three films for Ultramar. I've made one already, but I'm getting very tired. Acting and directing are too much. What director could help me make *El gran calavera*. So I think: Fernando Soler in *El gran calavera,* a comedy, and Miguel Delgado has been after Dancigers and me to make a film. I call him and tell him, 'Miguel, something has come up for you. Come talk to us. He comes and says, 'I like it. I'll do it. Fernando Soler can direct the actors, and I'll direct the camera. I'll help him. I'll make the film.' Fernando Soler: 'That's great, because Miguel Delgado is Cantinflas's director.' That was in May. I don't remember the date. Miguel Delgado says, 'Fine.' And he takes the script, but when he's almost ready to start working, something comes up, and a week later he tells me, 'I'm sorry. I just can't do it. I have to make a film with Cantinflas. We have to start filming in a week.' So he gives up our film, and Dancigers and I go back to figuring out who to ask. Then I tell him, 'Luis Buñuel is at home with nothing to do, living off the money Urgoiti and his mother send him. He's on Calle Nilo 44.' I remember it all very clearly. Dancigers said, 'Talk to him.' I went to his house and told him, 'Luis, do this.' He has a fit: 'You're crazy. Do you think I'm going to make that sort of film?' I told him, 'Luis, listen: you don't have any work. It will pay thirty thousand pesos at least. You've got to do this comedy.' Dancigers talked to him too. Finally, he told Dancigers, 'Okay, I'll make it to have a little fun.'

"He made it in eighteen days, exactly, within the budget. You can't imagine how he planned it out, with all the sets sketched out, all the shots figured out, and he got together with Soler to make the film. Do you know how he directed it? Luis Buñuel prepared the actors' movements and the movement on the scene. When he had worked out the movements that he wanted in a scene, he would turn around in his chair and say, 'Fernando, it's up to you now.' So then Fernando would go over the lines with the actors, and when they had gone through it—they were good actors, almost all of them knew their lines by heart—Fernando would turn to Buñuel and say, 'Luis, I'm ready. Now it's your turn.' Then there'd be a rehearsal with movement and lines. 'That's fine, that's fine. Let's do it.' And the guy made the film in eighteen days exactly within the budget, because he's the best producer there is. He knows about it all. Every night we'd finish work, and he'd say, 'Did you realize that I did it differently from everything I'd prepared ahead of time?' Because the camera

movements were determined by the set, right? And that's how he did the film. It was pretty successful. It worked out well. But, of course, it's a middling film, a commercial film. But it's well done for what it was, and it was successful."

"Very successful. And it made it possible for him to shoot *Los olvidados.* If he hadn't made that film, he wouldn't have made *Los olvidados*."

"Maybe not. Well, you already know how the idea for *Los olvidados* came up."

"With Larrea making 'Mi papelerito, jefe' ['Buy a Lottery Number, Boss']."

"Well, yeah. Here's how the idea for *Los olvidados* came up: Señor Menasce, Señor Dancigers and the Menasce family go to the theater on the Calle de Madero, the Rex, and they see *Shoeshine* [de Sica's *Sciuscià*]. That gave them the idea for *Los olvidados*. There was an argument between Menasce and Dancigers, and it's not quite clear who had the idea. The argument came later, and there was a little disagreement between them, but when they left the theater, they said, 'Why don't we make a film like that, with children? Let's make an interesting film about children. Maybe not *Shoeshine,* but with Mexican kids.' And then they agreed to make a film about children. 'Okay, what director could do it?' And then they think about Buñuel. 'Why don't we call Buñuel and see what he thinks about a film with kids?' Buñuel comes to the office, with Dancigers and Menasce there, and he says, 'I'll do it, provided that they're kids who interest me. I'd like kids who are … abnormal and not sickly sweet. I'll do it, but I'd want to read the records from children's courts.' And he gets in touch with children's courts, the Farm School … and he starts studying the records.[81] And that's where the story comes from. Everything in *Los olvidados* is authentic; it's what happens to kids in Mexico. Buñuel looked for the children. He found them, here and there, in the Farm School. A *Shoeshine* that takes place in Latin America. There's only one child actor or young actor. He plays Jaibo."[82]

"Yes, [Roberto] Cobo."

"And there's a boy Buñuel chose—Alfonso Mejía—out of three-hundred or so children that he saw, one at a time, for the main role. He saw all of them and chose the cast. When I saw there were so many children in the film, I told Dancigers, 'This is a delicate film, because Luis is deaf and working with children is really hard.' On top of it, Menasce had asked me to draw up a very precise budget for the film and had warned me that there would be no advance. With Luis Buñuel, children, and no stars, there was no advance for *Los olvidados.* He was going to put in all the money himself. So I worked up a budget of 525,000 pesos, and I had to make the film with that amount and not a peso more.

"Anyway, I told Dancigers, 'I think we'll need to get a teacher or … a guide to help the children learn their lines, understand what the film is about. Luis Buñuel is going to do it, but it'll be hard on him. And it'll be hard on us. So I told Dancigers, 'Let's get a theater director or somebody else to explain it all to them. Then I thought of José Luis Aceves, the theatrical director of the Teatro Caracol, the one who just died. I had seen two or three plays there, so I went to Dancigers to propose that we hire him. 'Let's go talk to him to hear what he says.' We told him about it. Then we talked to Buñuel, and he protested, 'No, no, not that. It's not worthwhile.' 'Worthwhile or not, it'll be better for you to have some kids who know what's going on, for you to have somebody who can help you with them.' He said, 'The assistant director.' 'He can't help you. The scriptclerk, as they call him here, can't help you either. Let Aceves work on it.' So we contracted Aceves, more or less with Buñuel's agreement, to prepare the kids. For three weeks before the shoot, he worked with the kids,

first to make sure they'd know their lines and then preparing them to work with the main actors. And when we got to the set, Buñuel realized, of course, that it had all been very useful. So Aceves prepared the boys before each scene, he helped them remember their lines, just like a teacher."

"Yes."

"A dialogue coach, right? He prepared all the material for them, and they shot the scene, and, of course, it was all a lot faster, and the film was made in exactly the time and the money we'd foreseen. It was easy in spite of the opposition of the Technical and Manual Workers, who wouldn't let Aceves—he wasn't a member of their group—work on the set. We had to ask the Union to let Aceves work in one of the offices away from the set every day to prepare the kids for the scenes they had to perform. That's how we did it."

"In all the films I've worked on with Buñuel, I've noticed that he's very precise about not wasting time and about getting the scene he wants. He says, 'I'll finish this film on the 25th at 5:30 in the afternoon, and he finishes on the 25th at 5:30 in the afternoon. He doesn't waste time. If he sees that one of his ideas isn't working out on the screen or it's not worth the time it will take, he'll opt for something, let's say, natural and fast that's easier to project instead of hunting around for the way to convey his idea cinematically. He's always done that.

"Okay, now tell me, Federico, the story about the ham."

"Apparently it was a custom in his house. He told me himself. His father had the custom of keeping the cured ham or the dry sausage or other things that were expensive in—he said in a strong box—but it must have been in a cupboard. And when Luis's father took it out, he'd cut himself a thin slice of ham and another for the first born, the oldest son. The others didn't get ham or sausage."

"It doesn't surprise me. The nineteenth century is full of characters like that, at least in the novels, which are the best source of history."

"But isn't it incredible? I couldn't stop laughing when he told me about it. He said, 'That's what my father was like. I'm not like that.' Then he pulls this kind of trick on you: he offers you a whiskey, and he says, 'You're not a drinker.' So he gives you a cheap whiskey. 'This other whiskey is for people who know their drinks,' he says. 'I'm not giving it to you.'"

"He doesn't do it to me, because I'm a drinker. Anyway, let's see, 'What do you know about Buñuel's mother?"

"Nothing. I know he has a great respect for her, and it bothers him that the things he does in films or private life, things that might hurt a parent's sensibilities, reach her ears. There's a typical anecdote from Mexico: once, years ago, Luis Alcoriza had a small party. Everybody dressed up as a friar. He called to invite me, saying I had to go as a priest or a sacristan. 'You're crazy. I'm not dressing up as a priest.' 'Everyone is gong to dress up.' So, I wore a normal suit and tie, but everybody else dressed up. They took photographs. The Espresates were there, and Ernesto García, his friends from the Madero Bookstore. A group of friends. Ten or twelve people, all of them dressed up. Three or four days later we got together at the Madero Bookstore, and Ernesto García and Expresate showed us the photographs. García said, 'I'm going to send these home so they'll see us. Buñuel got furious and said, 'If you do that, I'll break your nose. I don't want my mother to know I'm making fun of the Church.'"

"There's no surprise there."

"We were talking about *Los olvidados.*"

"They contracted Gabriel Figueroa for *Los olvidados,* because he had an international following. The cast would not be a big draw, but he would, and, too, we wanted to shoot the exteriors quickly, and Gabriel is brilliant at that. There was never a real understanding between Gabriel Figueroa and Luis Buñuel although they worked together more or less amicably. One day Gabriel Figueroa asked, 'Why have you hired me?' I answered him very calmly, 'Because you're the only star in this film.'

"There were a few scenes we had trouble with. For example, the scene with the chicken, a scene we shot in front of an iron structure that is now the Medical Center. Next to the French cemetery, there was a huge iron structure, and on that flat surface we planned to shoot the scene when the boys hit the blind man and break his drum—you'll remember it clearly. On the spur of the moment Buñuel asked for something that wasn't in the script: a chicken. What did he want it for? Nobody knew. We were working very fast then and pretty carefully, out of a sense of economy and because, after lunch, we were going someplace else to shoot. The photographer came up and told me, 'Look. I want the scene to come out this way: when the blind man is lying flat on the ground, beaten up by the boys, the chicken has to be in front of him, looking him in the face. If I can't shoot it in twenty minutes, forget the chicken, and forget the scene. So, I allowed half an hour to shoot the scene with the chicken. We rented a chicken. They asked ten pesos for her. I said, 'Okay, ten pesos.' The chicken wasn't worth that much, but we wanted to shoot the scene. We made three takes, and there wasn't a single take when the chicken and the blind man were face to face. After twenty or twenty-five minutes, Buñuel said, 'We can't do it. Let's go. Cut. Let's eat.' In the afternoon, we had to go to Tacubaya to shoot the scene with the … cripple."

"Right."

"But the next day, when we saw the rushes on the screen, the scene with the chicken, who never faced the blind man but turned her back end on him, was so impressive that Luis Buñuel and I agreed to repeat the chicken scene every time we were shooting exteriors in the Federal District. In fact, we had such good luck repeating the scene two or three days later that the chicken showed her face, and we cut it there. That's a story about improvisation. You can ask yourself why bother, but that's the way Buñuel works. That's where his genius lies."

"Okay, tell me something about Lilia Prado, because that's a funny story."

[They talk about Lilia's determination to show off her acting chops in *Abismos de pasión*—she usually performed as a *rumbera* (rumba dancer)—but now she was playing an important role. Buñuel commented that the cast was impossible because "you have a Polish woman playing the lead and a *rumbera* in the supporting role." Aub and Amérigo agree that the cemetery scene at the end is brilliant, but that the rest of the film doesn't come off.]

"But, tell me [Aub presses on] how Luis responded to Lilia's romantic overtures."

"What he did in private, I don't know. The girl's enthusiasm was obvious, but Luis is not a man who'll open up about these things or show what he's up to."

"No, not him. He only says he had love affairs with two extras. That's the only thing he mentions…. He's told me, very clearly, that all the time he's been in Mexico, he's only fallen in love twice: 'So, in this country, I've only gone out with two extras,

and I was really in love, both times.'"

"I don't know. He may have been pulling your leg, because he's perfectly capable of that. I don't remember. I know there are two or three extras, men and women, that he always uses, almost as pets, but as to love affairs, I don't know. Of course, he's always so punctual about his work, the time he leaves work, that I've never seen him take any woman off in his car."

"That's true. Okay, now, tell me if you have the slightest idea who—somebody who's worked closely with you on a lot of things—told me he's heard Buñuel is queer."

"I have no idea at all."

* * *

"Tell me about how Luis makes his films and the relationship between the script and the film. We're talking about *Nazarín*."

"Okay. Luis wanted a writer to help him with the adaptation of the novel. They were thinking of Luis Alcoriza or Julio Alejandro."

"What is—or was—the problem between Manuel Barbachano and Luis Alcoriza?"

"I don't think there's anything specific. The only thing is that maybe—either because of Velo's opinion or Manuel Barbachano's personal taste—the things Luis Alcoriza does, or did up to the time of *Nazarín,* that maybe they don't like the work or the style or the content of what Luis Alcoriza does. Maybe it's also because Luis Alcoriza projects a certain … pedantry that sometimes rubs Velo and Buñuel the wrong way, no? The question of which writer to use in *Nazarín* came up this way: I was very familiar with the collaboration between Luis Buñuel and Luis Alcoriza. My own concern, which I discussed with Manolo Barbachano and Carlos Velo, was which writer would be better for the project. *Nazarín* with Luis Alcoriza would probably turn into a different kind of story, which could be very good, but might not respect the Pérez Galdós novel. We discussed this in detail. And we thought it might be a good idea to use a man like Julio Alejandro with Catholic convictions, someone who might act as a better stimulus to Luis Buñuel than Luis Alcoriza. We even talked about it with Luis Buñuel. Luis liked the idea. I don't know whether it was because at that point he preferred to work with somebody besides Alcoriza or because he wanted to work with Julio Alejandro again.

"Besides all that, Luis Alcoriza was very busy, working on something else, so they agreed not to call him at all and just to call Julio Alejandro. His collaboration with Buñuel on *Nazarín* was ideal. There were some arguments, but they understood each other, and I'm sure that Luis Buñuel was very satisfied, because later on, in a succession of films, he called on Julio Alejandro. And various times Buñuel told me, 'It's a pleasure to work with Julio Alejandro, because he'll argue with you, but he's not pig-headed like Alcoriza. There's more passion in him. I feel freer with Julio Alejandro, and the collaboration is closer.'"

[They talk about a meeting Barbachano set up with various intellectuals from other fields to read the adaptation Buñuel and Julio Alejandro had made of Galdos's novel. The intellectuals who weren't familiar with film were very disappointed in the screenplay. One of them—the historian García Cantú—asked Amérigo how he could say the script was ready for filming.]

"I told him that with Luis Buñuel and with our experience, the script was ready and that Buñuel would resolve any problems as they came up. They saw the first part as theatrical and the second as more cinematic, but you had to know how to read between the lines.

Early on, Luis Buñuel prepared his plots and his scripts with great care, but as he gained confidence and experience making films here in Mexico, all he needed was a note; he keeps everything else already prepared in his head. He solves everything else on the set."

"On the spot."

"And on the spot. I'm making a point of Gastón García Cantú's question, because when the film was completely finished, we showed it in the projection room at the studio to the same group of intellectuals. García Cantú was moved by it. He asked me how I knew that they could make such a film from that script, because he never would have believed that the film we'd just seen could come out of that script. It's a question of experience, isn't it? Now, it doesn't always work out that way. Some films don't turn out well. Buñuel was also very confident in *Abismos de pasión,* and it was a failure. It failed, because the cast was wrong."

Amérigo tells me about the terrible times they have when Buñuel loses his sense of balance and has to sit down without being able to move or speak, suffering terribly [from Ménière's Syndrome] not just because of the vertigo but psychologically, too, because he can't do anything and how, in a few sequences in *Nazarín,* he had to finish guided by just a ray of light….

"You have no idea of the level of intensity he projected from his eyes. And in the tropics. You can't imagine. Suddenly, he would start to twist, to get all twisted up, and dehydrated, and it was absolutely terrifying to see him force himself to work at the camera."

I can't imagine the scene, but the following anecdote gives an idea of what Buñuel can be like with his best friends in his worst moments. I was telling him and Amérigo and a few others about showing *Nazarín* the day before to some university students, and I mentioned that in the very good copy I used for the students there were two cuts: the scene of the laughing Christ and the one when a woman washes her hands in the holy water font. Buñuel's expression changed in a second—like me, he had imagined that Amérigo himself had cut the scenes although Amérigo defended himself—and he blurted out:

"I don't give a damn who did it, whether you did it or my mother did it; I shit on you, I shit on my mother; I shit on all of you. That's something that can't be done to me, that can't be done to a surrealist. And if what I intended to do and what I did was precisely to wound, to upset, to trample the public's feelings, that's my business, totally and absolutely up to me, and nobody has the right to come between the audience and me, and however the audience reacts, that's their problem."

I was astonished at how calm Amérigo remained, how he tried to explain to Buñuel that that copy had just come back from Argentina and that, obviously, the projectionist there had decided to cut out those parts of the film.

"I don't care about any son of a bitch, whether he's Argentine or not, and you're perfectly capable of doing that."

And clenching his fists fiercely, he walked out of the room, leaving the rest of us a bit shocked.

"Don't pay any attention," Amérigo said. "I'm used to him."

Two minutes later, Luis reappeared, transformed, begging our pardon: "I get beside myself, and I can't control it. I can't resist it. What right do they have to do that?"

"None at all, but they do it."

Amérigo explained to him that, using the negative, they would restore the copy.

Luis Alcoriza

With his parents, Alcoriza formed a company of touring actors who left Spain during the Civil War and finally fetched up in Mexico when Luis was twenty-two. He put down roots there, working first as an actor, then as a scriptwriter and director in film. With his wife, the actress and scriptwriter Janet, Alcoriza became a close friend of Buñuel's and co-wrote with Buñuel a number of the director's Mexican films: Los olvidados, Él, El río y la muerte *(*Death and the River*),* La ilusión viaje en tranvía *and* El ángel exterminador, *as well as co-writing* El gran calavera *and* La hija del engaño *with his wife, and helping write* La mort en ce jardin *and* La Fièvre monte à El Pao. *He directed a number of films himself, the most successful being, probably, the brilliant comedy* Mecánica nacional *[*National Mechanics*].*

[Alcoriza speaks about some of the Freudian theories relating to Buñuel's films that Dr. Fernando Césarman elaborated in his interviews with Aub. These came out later in a book entitled *El ojo de Buñuel: psicoanálisis desde una butaca* ('The Eye: Pscyhoanalysis from a Theater Seat'). Césarman's literal-minded Freudianism—if this is not an oxymoron—was the subject of some amusement for Buñuel and Carrière, who sent the director a charming caricature of the doctor pronouncing his theories at a Paris gathering. Aub gave the psychiatrist a lot of time in his interviews (included in the 1985 book, but not here), and Alcoriza disputes what he has heard or, perhaps, read.]

"*El bruto* covered the same ground [as *Los olvidados* and *Él*] where total realism [is mixed with surrealism and mystery]. It involved a case which, at that time, was very topical, considering that rents were frozen and that people who threw up shanty towns overnight were being expelled and all that … and hitmen were used, and there were shocking incidents, so this film was concerned with real events, and had nothing—absolutely nothing, nothing that came up in conversation, or when we were having a coffee and not talking about work—nothing interested us less than Hernán Cortés, or the Tlaxcaltecas, or the invasion of Mexico. We always worked a little by impulse, by intuition, and we were dealing with some incidents that seemed to work pretty well.

There's an odd anecdote. We suddenly realized—and you saw it too and noted it down—not so much the *zarzuelas* [operettas], which of course have been a consistent influence on both of us, but the terrible influence of [*Don Juan*] *Tenorio* and also of different operas. If you take a good look at the end of *Los olvidados,* when the mother walks past the dead body of her son, it's a little like *Rigoletto.* When Buñuel was going to make *Viridiana,* he told me with a lot of humor, I'm going to make a film as usual, basing it on the beloved in the *Tenorio,* on a novice nun who's about to take her vows. That's the starting point of *Viridiana.*

"There's the weak spot in *El bruto* as you've pointed out: it doesn't really relate to Mexico. I agree. It's very Spanish. I don't think the main character has anything to do with the Mexican macho. At one point when we were talking about that monstruous family with a paralytic uncle, a dominant wife, a family that smothers him, that absorbs him, that dominates him totally, we started to think about making another film, a film about the character's ancestors, about that life of poverty in a terrible neighborhood and that man with all his vitality and his strength, dominated by those people who had him tied down there, blackmailing him morally and grasping the little bit of money he makes. So that guy, I don't agree that he would abandon his future wives because of the Mexican man's tendency to abandon his home, because, in reality, don Andrés isn't a *gachupín,* but just a regular

Spaniard. That film could take place anywhere in Spain, substituting the baseball cap they use here for a beret and a corduroy suit, and it would be almost more natural, wouldn't it?"

[Aub interrupts.] "But let me tell you: a regular Spaniard here in Mexico is called a *gachupín*."

"I know, but we'd only call him a *gachupín* in relation to Mexicans; however, as it happens, the majority of the characters in the film are very Spanish because of our influence. The woman who sells the meat, her open, almost violent, sexuality, her passion, her need to say everything loud and clear is much more Spanish than Mexican. The Mexican woman is much more self-contained, no? The relationship between the young girl, the one Rosita Arenas plays, and her father I'm not sure you could call it oedipal; I'd never thought about it before. I think in the film it says that the mother died, not that she abandoned—she never abandoned—the family, but the father there is a far cry from anything you could call oedipal because the poor man's sick, tubercular; he's killing himself to keep the family going. He's just a poor, worn-out laborer. There's no way the daughter could be in love with him. In short…. I don't know.

"I don't know how to analyze the film in that way, because I do everything to avoid analysis, especially Freudian analysis, for one thing, and second, because the comparison between the normal work you do to move a story along, operating more or less by impulse, and then suddenly being told the main character's so complicated, well I'm not entirely convinced by it. I don't think it's all that important. It's a much more straight-forward thing of showing some characters in a real-life situation, without such a twisted explanation. Maybe that explanation makes sense, but I don't see it.

"Where I do agree with you is that the film is totally Spanish, that the characters relate to each other as Spaniards would, not Mexicans. I think that if the main character married that girl, he'd make a magnificent father, with the very Spanish situation of having abandoned one home to marry into another, but without doing it again and again as a Mexican might. The old man—according to rumor and what he's been told—is the Bruto's father; he's protected the protagonist since he was a kid, and the guy respects him profoundly. After all, the old man might be his father, and he's very powerful because he has money and possessions and is authoritarian, while, in spite of his size, the protagonist is a poor weakling. He's childish, and he can't deal with the situations he's faced with. It's natural that he turns to his possible father for protection."

"Let me ask you something" [Aub interjects]. "When the old man says 'Son of a bitch,' he's really referring to the possibility that he has known the protagonist's mother."

"Yes probably, of course. It's true. He says 'Son of a bitch,' because the censors wouldn't let him say, 'Son of a whore.' We'd have used it if they'd let us, because it's correct. It's very clear that that gentleman had a sexual relationship with the protagonist's mother. Whether or not, he's the father isn't clear. It's gossip, but the gentleman did go to bed with the protagonist's mother, and she was his lover. That's very clear. Isn't it?"

"It really interests me, because I've worked on the same idea, and that's the way it seemed to me."

* * *

[At another point, possibly a different interview, Alcoriza is obviously answering a question that does not appear in the transcript.] "No, no, no. It was very simple when Óscar

Dancigers contracted us to make *Los olvidados.* You know the whole story … that first Buñuel took him a screenplay he and Juan Larrea had made. Dancigers didn't like it and said that he wanted to make a film about abandoned children in Mexico City, but he wanted something much stronger and more serious. Then he called me and got us together, and Buñuel asked me—he wasn't reticent about it—he asked me very clearly who would get the final say when we disagreed about something. I answered that whoever was right would have the last word. He insisted that it was possible that we'd both stick to our ideas and then we'd fall into an impasse and waste a lot of time without making any headway. Then I—very arrogant at that point—said that when he was directing, I would go to the studio, shine his shoes, do anything he asked me, but as collaborators on a screenplay, we were on equal footing. He smiled and didn't say anything. The next day, he came to my house and we started to talk and, of course, at that moment I practically disappeared, because he dominated me completely, and I gave way.

"I didn't give way to his great intelligence or to him as a filmmaker—because he never taught me filmmaking—but to his way of thinking and of seeing things. More than that, even today, when I'm faced with a conflict, I often ask myself, 'What would Buñuel say about that? How would he react?' He always serves me as a guide, because he's a man of great integrity, with a great vision, a great sensibility about many things, especially when he can see them objectively, when he's not involved. When he's involved, that changes things, but when he sees something objectively, he always has a very honest, very fair opinion that's worth considering. He's recommended books to me, he's told me thousands of things, he's shown me a whole world that I intuited, but didn't know how to find. He's been a real father to me and has had a huge influence on me, in every little bit of my life, and he still has it even though we haven't seen each other in seven years, right? It's inevitable….

"After years of sitting in the same place" [Alcoriza continues,] "he left a spot of grease on the wall. I always joked that every time we talked about painting the house, he'd say, 'You can paint the house, but that spot has to be conserved for history.' And we always promised him that we'd leave that little spot of grease and even put a frame around it someday to commemorate the grease from Buñuel's bald head, because he always sat in the same spot and lent his head back in the same way, and the spot got bigger and bigger…."

"Tomorrow" [Aub confesses] "I'm going to see a really horrendous film by Luis: *Pedro y Juan* or *Una mujer sin amor*, a film he made with Jaime Salvador more or less at the same time.[83] What do you know about that film that nobody knows anything about?"

"I've never seen it. I know it was a script that Jaime Salvador and … [Rudolfo Usigli] had already written for Posa Films. They offered it to him, and he agreed to do it for whatever reason without touching the script; in other words, he refused to even try to improve the script, not to intervene, not to change even a sentence. It was a way to eliminate his own responsibility, because he realized that the piece wasn't very good. He used his technical abilities to film it, but he didn't put any other part of himself into it. I think he may have had a little bit to do—but I'm not even sure about that—a little bit to do with the relations between a young woman and an old man, since that was something that came into his terrain and allowed him to take some interest and handle with a certain delicacy, but he accepted the rest of the plot without intervening at all or making himself responsible for the film."

"What other films did you make with Luis? Let's list them."

"Well, first he directed a mediocre comedy that was already written and sold, so he didn't change anything in it, he just directed it. That was *El gran calavera,* with Fernando Soler. They reached an agreement, because with the frivolity that is so typical of him even though he's a marvelous person, Soler said that Buñuel was a very bad director of actors. So they reached a *gentlemen's agreement* [in English] that Buñuel would direct the camera and Soler, the actors. That's how they started out although I'd guess that half-way through the same thing happened to Fernando Soler that happened to me, and he realized that the gentleman directed actors a little better than he did, so Luis started to get more involved in it. That was the first film [I made with him], because it came just before *Los olvidados*…."

"And what did you have to do with *El gran calavera*?"

"I wrote the screenplay."

"Ah."

"And I was also involved in making it, because it was my last film as an actor. One day I went by the set just to visit. Galán had stage fright and clammed up.[84] They sent me home to get a suit, and they made me act, to Luis's great amusement. He died laughing in every scene when I had to act. Every time I had to act, he could hardly speak, because he was laughing so hard. After that, we did *Los olvidados* and then *El bruto.* Later they gave me a contract and flew me to France to work with Luis on an adaptation of *La Femme et le pantin.* He had a disagreement with … with the producer [Edmond Ténoudji], and the film wasn't made. Later on it was filmed with a completely different screenplay that was pretty bad.[85] After that we made … what was it called? *La mort en ce jardin*. I worked first of all with Raymond Queneau. We started writing in Paris; then we came to Mexico. He came to write the dialogues, but after that Gabriel Arout came, because, as usual, the French don't like Queneau's dialogues even though they were magnificent. After that, we made a film with Gérard Philipe, *La fièvre monte à el Pao.* I worked on it until an … illustrious writer—Louis Sapin—came with very clear orders from the producer to avoid imposing any Freudian or psychological ideas on the script. I don't know how he managed to convince Luis, but I quit the project, and they kept on working together and corrected the definitive version of the script that Luis and I had done together, and Sapin cut out some ideas about the woman's story or—I'm not sure what—about the psychology of that *femme*."

"Those two are Luis's worst films, as I see it."

"Yes, but…. *La mort en ce jardin* has some moments that aren't too bad."

"But it's very uneven."

"Very uneven."

"And the other one—*La fièvre*—to speak frankly, they really made a mess of it. We really made a mess of it, because I was involved too."

"On top of that, in *La mort en ce jardin,* there was that awful business between … and Buñuel."

"Who?"

"What's the name of that actress?"

"Simone Signoret."

"Simone Signoret, right, and it was a real…. Today if you mention Buñuel to Simóne Signoret, she speaks as badly about him as he does about her, which is saying a lot."

"And yet they were close friends; they really were fond of each other. What probably

bothered him was that in her extreme professionalism she drove him crazy about details related to her clothing and wrinkles and the dirtiness and dust and sweat that were part of that place. He had his own concerns, and she called him every five minutes to ask something, and that's why he started to get irritated…."

"And he's still irritated, because when he talks about that film the only thing he remembers is the problems with Simone Signoret."

[There must be a break in the recording here. Alcoriza responds to a question.] "What? Oh, yes. I don't quite remember where the other films fit in."

"Don't worry. I've got that all in order."

"*El río y la muerte* was based on a novel called *Muro blanco en roca negra* ['White wall on a black rock']."

"Yes, by [Miguel Álvarez] Acosta."

"By Acosta, and I thought there were some very good things in it and that the film was excellent, but they didn't understand it outside of Mexico, because all that thing about the deaths and the Mexican vendettas probably seemed ridiculous to outsiders even though it was an accurate account of what was happening here. Later, he made another film I worked on—all of us did—called *La ilusión viaja en tranvía*. When you told the story, it sounded like a nice idea, but that turned out to be what the Americans call *wishful thinking* [in English]. When we started to deal with it, we saw there was no way to make it work, that the theme wasn't what it seemed to be. If I remember rightly, [José] Revueltas, Juan de la Cabada, Buñuel started. Later on they called me in, and Juan de la Cabada did some more work on it, and the result was a very strange film, with some very funny scenes—especially Juan's—and some hilarious dialogues. The scene on the streetcar with the pigs' heads and all that was very nice, but there were some awful things as well, because it was a very uneven film. Everybody contributed good things, and the overall idea was good, but the end product left a lot to be desired."

[Something is missing from the transcript here. There seems to be a discussion of *The Young One*, made in English for an American audience, which they have heard is wonderful but haven't seen.]

"Can you talk about making *El ángel exterminador*?"

"It was originally called 'Los náufragos de la calle de la Providencia,' and it was going to be three short stories, produced by Barbachano. One was to be 'Los náufragos'; another was a story about insects, about a world where the people reacted like bugs, and the third was a story called 'La niña' ['The Little Girl'; the first is 'The Castaways of Providence Street']."

"Who wrote the story?"

"Both of us … both of us. We spent some time in San José Purúa, and we came up with these things. Barbachano rejected what we read to him. I have the one about the insects and 'The Little Girl.' He wasn't convinced because of the influence of third parties that I won't mention here, people who weren't very helpful to us, and that was that. Later we revised the work [i.e., 'The náufragos story], and there were certain weak points. Luis was particularly dissatisfied with the last part, because originally it ended so that the world that surrounded the mystery—why nobody could leave and nobody could enter the house because of the strange abulia that had seized them—that world decided to settle the matter in the most logical and civilized way possible, according to the laws and customs of our society, and they wound up throwing a bomb at the house. That is, everything was more

or less the same until the moment when everybody was leaving and the mystery was reproduced again, that is, someone started playing the Scarlatti sonata that had started it all off, and they felt liberated, they forgave each other, and, just at that moment, the house exploded. Luis thought—and he was right—that at that point, the bomb was a cliché. Later on—we were back at San José Purúa, I have the book upstairs, where I've noted down all the characters again that left the house: the old man, the old man with the young girl, then … you know who it is, don't you? … Let's not say. All these new characters came out, with some variations. He noted down a series of ideas, and we went our separate ways. I became a director, I started doing my own things, and Luis did the last revision of the screenplay on his own. He added these characters, that we'd thought up together. He put some of his own ideas in, parts of a television program that he'd written as an attack by the *sierras*."

"What attack by the *sierras*?"

"Wait a minute. There's a point in the film when they talk about an attack by the *sierras*, isn't there?"

"Not that I remember."

"Then he must have taken it out at the last minute, but he had put it in."

"By the *sierras*? What do you mean? [Saws or mountain ranges?]"

"Saws, mechanical saws, mechanical saws and hand saws, and all that stuff. I think it's in the film; it may have been cut in the final editing, but I think it was filmed, that he'd written it … and…. I was working on something else, and he wrote the last revision of the screenplay."

"Okay. The problem I see here…."

"That's why in the credits, since he couldn't put that it was an adaptation by one person of a treatment by another, since we worked on both things together, he puts down that it's his, based on a script—the script is the whole thing—written by both of us. In other words, it's a script written by both of us and revised by him."

"Fine. Now one thing [about *The Exterminating* Angel] has always worried me. I've already asked you about it, but I'd like you to repeat what you told me. It's related to the dead. The dead never came out of the house. The idea that was filmed first, the part about the church, the dead don't appear in it although Rita Macedo does, but later she doesn't appear in the film. The dead … your idea is that the dead were dead and gone."

"Right. There's no resurrection. They put the dead away carefully in the film. There was a time, when we were working on the film, that we thought of having more deaths—no?—but we thought it would be too grisly, so we dropped it. They put the cadavers in the closet and shut it up tight because of the smell, but when somebody says, 'we're in exactly the same positions we were in that first night when we were about to leave. After thousands of combinations, we're in exactly the same places we were in that night.' That's when they take out the dead precisely so that—even as dead bodies—they can occupy the same places they did at the moment when the mysterious situation began. [This doesn't actually happen in the final version.] But, logically, once they've all left that place, those dead bodies will be buried, and the ones who go to the 'Te Deum' to give their thanks are the survivors. We didn't think, even for an instant, of the resurrection of the flesh. The dead are dead and buried. As to the ending. I don't know what Luis thinks of it now. Our first idea was a plaza, then seeing the cathedral when they're all there inside with the yellow flag to warn of the plague, of the quarantine. Then we talked hundreds of times about a memory that came

from my childhood and his life as an adult. You must have had it too. When I was just a kid, a student, I saw those demonstrations in the Plaza del Sol [in Madrid], those meetings, and suddenly the cavalry would come down on them along Calle Alcalá."

"The Civil Guard."

"The Civil Guard and … and the shouting and suddenly tararara, the alarm sounds, silence falls, the alarm sounds for a second time and suddenly the plaza is deserted—right?—because you knew that with the third alarm the firing would start and the horses would charge. And that was the idea: a crowd of people rising in revolt and then meeting with those cavalry charges that are so, so familiar to us, and afterward you'd see some shepherds leading their herd into the cathedral. When I saw the film, I told Luis it would be misunderstood, because a lot of people thought, since it was a flock of sheep, they thought 'the lamb is symbolic—no?—the lamb of God or they followed like sheep.' There are a lot of set expressions around sheep and lambs. I don't know what happened. Luis probably asked for one thing and got another, and he didn't realize in time how it could be misinterpreted, because, in reality, what they're giving those people in the cathedral is meat. We've already seen how these irrational beings, these sheep, when they're in the mansion and the bear scares them, they don't have any trouble crossing into the room, where they serve the people imprisoned there as food. What they've learned from the experience is to get meat to those people. As I see it, the herd should have been a cow or so, a few pigs, some sheep and some goats, that is, a series of meat-bearing animals that enter the cathedral so those people won't starve. It seems that, for whatever reason, they didn't find different animals, so they just brought a flock of sheep. I don't know if Luis did it intentionally. I tend to think he didn't, that in the moment he was trying to get things done and, since it doesn't really matter whether they're lambs or goats, he didn't realize that in their desire to analyze everything people would give the flock of sheep a Christian religious meaning or think of them as conformists or what."

"When there's no symbolic meaning there. That happens a lot in Luis's films: that people look for symbols when there aren't any."

"None at all."

"That's been true since his first films."

"There's more: Luis has never been a symbolist. I think he's completely opposed to the symbolist movement precisely because what he looks for, as a surrealist, are mechanisms that are totally irrational…. He's too smart and too sophisticated to fall for little symbolic interpretations that are childish and facile, right? His viewers wear themselves out looking for symbols in everything he does. Well, that's great if that's their idea of fun. But I think it's absurd. The last thing you should look for in Buñuel is symbolism. Instead, you should do the opposite, look for the passionate, irrational, intuitive meaning, which is what he usually…."

"The best, the best proof of that is the ending of *L'Âge d'or*. What symbolism is there in turning the Marquis de Sade into Jesus Christ. There's just no way. It's Jesus Christ, and it's…."

"Jesus Christ is the Duke of Blangis of *Cint Vingt journées de Sodome*, and I don't remember who the other character is … but there're no symbols. Christ is Christ, and the Duke of Blangis is the Duke of Blangis and the other is … whoever he is, but there aren't any symbols. It's Christ in person, but they always look for symbols. If the guy shows them

a piece of meat, immediately they decide it's something else, the placenta or something. They just have to find a symbol somewhere."

"We're in complete agreement on that."

Pedro (Père) Portabella

9 December 1969

A producer who lent his name—but no money whatsoever—along with the UNINCI group to Viridiana *when it was filmed in Spain. The presence of his company—Films 59—was intended to offset the communist inflections of UNINCI.*

[Aub starts off saying that Buñuel recommended he speak to Portabella. Portabella speaks of Buñuel as old and exhausted at the time he was making *Viridiana.* The flight over—his first transatlantic flight—exacerbated his Menière's Syndrome, according to Alatriste, so this may, in part, explain the fatigue, but in 1961 he was obviously far from washed up.] Portabella says, "We were living in next-door apartments, and I had to put up with all his manias: his insistence on punctuality, his early rising.… The film was made, and we were with Buñuel for almost a year. As a result, at least on my part, there's a very affectionate relationship with old Buñuel."

[He and Aub chat for a while. During this time, Portabella claims that as a person Buñuel is intolerable, that his films are tolerable—just—that Domingo Dominguín—the leader of UNINCI and a notorious womanizer—and Buñuel were lovers for fifteen years, that Dominguín left Buñuel for Portabella and that Buñuel has never forgiven Portabella. This unlikely scenario is impossible for chronological reasons alone, since Buñuel did not meet Dominguín until shortly before *Viridiana* was shot and the aftermath of the film drove them apart. He also emphasizes Buñuel's stinginess. In this he is not alone. Finally, he finishes with what Aub calls, "The prodigious story of Buñuel and Kafka."]

"While the film was being prepared, I had the screenplay of a film I was going to produce. It was written by Ferreri, a version of Kafka's *The Castle*.[86] One day we were talking with Dominguín, and for some reason it came up. At one point of the conversation, Buñuel came up to me and said, 'Can you believe this? I think Dominguito believes Kafka is still alive!' I looked at him a little surprised, and he says, 'You'll see.' After a while we started to talk about the work, and then we went on to talk about the author. Buñuel said that he'd gotten a letter from Kafka just a little while ago, written from Dublin. I remember that he said Dublin, which is pretty good, isn't it? Dominguito didn't react, showing he really believed that Kafka was alive. So this joke was just the beginning, because you know that Luis loves to put a joke on top of a joke and then to keep on with it. He won't let go of the thing. So he forced us to take things further. Anyhow, one day, at another dinner, Luis told me, 'By the way, I've gotten a letter from Kafka where he says that he'd really like to come here and meet you, because you're a young and gutsy producer. And anyway, he'd like to have a look around. What do you think?' At that point, Dominguito said, '*Hombre,* that would be fabulous, because if he helps publicize the film, it could be very worthwhile, right?' So I said, 'Don't you think that would add a lot to the cost of the film?' But Dominguito insisted and insisted that I invite Kafka. And Luis said, 'My god, Pedro, I'm surprised

that you'd be so tight about it with all the experience you have. You've got to bring Kafka. I know him very well and….' So that's where things stood. Then, at the end of another dinner, Luis announced, talking to me, that he'd heard from Kafka again and he had the date, which was within a week or two. Given the situation, obviously we had to start getting ready for Kafka's arrival. So Buñuel suggested that it would be great if Lucia and Luis Miguel went to the airport in a convertible to pick up Kafka. So we started sketching out our plans. I said it seemed like a good idea, but we'd have to get Luis Miguel to read at least the titles of some of Kafka's works, so he wouldn't look like an idiot, because really getting him to read would be impossible, right? So we agreed that Dominguito would undertake that part. When Luis and I were on our own, he decided that the best thing of all would be to get the worst extra in Madrid, fit him out in a cape like Kafka, and pay for his round-trip to Dublin, because, Luis said, left to his own devices an extra would appear like a Kafkaesque character, but not like Kafka. The story only got that far, because a mutual friend got hold of Dominguito and told him that Kafka had died a good while back.'

"Who was it that spilled the beans?"

"Javierito Pradera [the anti–Franco activist] and that was the end of the story."

Everybody laughs. Pedro Portabella is an excellent inventor. We've had fun. And the food also had his touch. It's strange the influence of Buñuel, not so much in his film work which, alas, hasn't affected so many, as in his style. But it's also true that Dominguito is obviously not one of Portabella's favorite people.

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Notes

Introduction

1. Jan Martínez Ahrens, "La orfebrería de 'Cien Años de Soledad,'" *El País:* elpais.com/cultura/2015/04/29.

2. Alicia Gómez Navarro, the current director of the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid, told the film historian Román Gubern that Aub himself had told her this (e-mail from Gubern, 22 November 2013). Aub was born three years later than Buñuel, in 1903, in Paris of a French mother, whose background was German-Jewish, and a German father. The family moved to Spain in 1914, residing in Valencia. Aub was a prolific and highly esteemed novelist, poet, playwright, critic and film writer.

3. "Buñuel de carne y hueso," *El País:* elpais.com/cultura/2013/10/31, 1–3.

Personal Prologue

1. Protagonist of *Jusep Torres Campalans* (1958), Aub's "biography" of a fictitious Catalonian painter.

2. Louis Aragon wrote *Henri Matisse, roman* (*Henri Matisse, a novel*), a "collage" combining reproductions of Matisse's paintings with poetry and comments by Aragon. Aub had already chosen his title—*Buñuel, novela*—when he heard that Aragón's book was coming out in 1972 (Soldevila 126).

3. Hugo died in 1885, so Aub's mother may well have seen the burial procession; however, Napoleon's mortal remains were returned from the island of St. Helena, where he died, to Paris in 1840, so she could hardly have witnessed this ceremony.

4. In fact, Aub made a concerted effort to find out whether Buñuel had actually joined the Communist Party (whether of France or of Spain), but Buñuel always eluded his attempts (see 272–73*n*163). Earlier in his prologue, Aub notes that both of them were more interested in justice than in truth, so the statement made above is a contradiction.

5. The Spanish Civil War (often referred to here as simply "the war") involved the destruction of the democratically elected Second Republic by conservative forces—landowners, the Church, monarchists, large swaths of the military, many businessmen and the fascist inspired Falange—under the leadership of General Francisco Franco, who quickly took control of the insurrection. The pro-Republican forces were comprised of urban workers, most agricultural workers, certain segments of the military and the educated middle class. Of these groups, some wanted simply to maintain a working democracy; others to establish a new, revolutionary society (i.e., the anarchists, socialists and what was originally a small group of communists). The rebel camp was aided by the German Nazis and the Italian fascists. Denied the support of other democracies—England, France and the U.S.—who adopted a non-interventionist stance, the Republicans were forced to rely more and more heavily on military support from the Soviet Union; however, the Republicans were ultimately "outgunned," and the war that had begun in July 1936 came to an end in the spring of 1939.

6. The "Student Residence," founded in 1910, was intended to provide not only a place where university students could live but also thrive intellectually, whether in the arts or the sciences. An ongoing forum for ideas, it invited internationally recognized intellectuals to spend time there and served as a kind of hot bed for progressive ideas. This is where Buñuel, Federico García Lorca and Salvador Dalí met and became friends, but it will be clear that a large number of the people interviewed or referred to in these pages were also products of the "Resi." In the years after the return of Democracy to Spain in 1977, the Residencia regained the cultural ascendency lost during the Franco period although it now limits student residents to a fixed number with grants and depends heavily on short stays by foreign academics. It also accepts women as well as men, which was not the case in Buñuel's time. It has developed a notable archive, and has an also notable series of lectures, conferences and publications.

Part I

1. Surrealism, founded in Paris in the early 1920s by the writers André Breton, Louis Aragon and Philippe Soupault, privileged the unconscious, the irrational and the dream state. It sought a revolution of consciousness, but was not adverse to political revolution as well, relating at different points to anarchism and communism. It was a small group of artists and intellectuals, led by Breton and Aragon, that—after *Un Chien andalou* came out in 1929—would also embrace Buñuel and Salvador Dalí. Although the initial group fell apart after a number of years, other groups had been formed in cities throughout the world, and its influence continues to be felt. In May 1968 students and workers joined together to protest against capitalism, the consumer ethos and the unquestioning acceptance of traditional institutions. The movement began in Paris but spread to the rest of France. It became a celebration of freedom, hence its evocation of surreal-

ism. The demonstrations and general strikes brought France's economy to its knees. The French President, Charles de Gaulle, called for new parliamentary elections in June, and the movement fizzled out quickly.

2. Buñuel may have jumped for joy, but he also got out of town, staying in Belgium and then Madrid until things quieted down in Paris. Fernando Arrabal, the Spanish playwright, novelist and filmmaker, lived in Paris.

3. Pascual Cervera y Topete was admiral of Spain's Caribbean Squadron during the Spanish American War. His fleet was destroyed by the United States Navy on 3 July 1898, off Santiago. The disaster gave occasion to a famous comment: "It's better to have honor and no boats, than boats and no honor."

4. Ado Kyrou, *Luis Buñuel: An Introduction* (1963). See the interview with Kyro.

5. Eduardo Ugarte, a long-time friend of the director's from their early days in Madrid. The two also coincided in Paris, in Hollywood and in Mexico. Active in the world of theater and cinema, Ugarte co-authored the screenplay *Don Quintín, el amargao* (*Don Quintin, the Bitter*) with Buñuel and played the role of the priest in *Él* (*El*/*This Strange Passion*).

6. Buñuel's father signed up, along with other boys from his hometown, to fight for Spain in the first war for Cuban independence from. Known as the Ten Years War, it lasted from 1868–1878. The battleship *Maine* had been sent to Havana harbor to protect U.S. interests during the second Cuban war for independence (1895–98). On 15 February 1898, the boat exploded for reasons that are still not entirely clear. Due in part to the explosion, the U.S. entered the war, fighting against Spain. The war ended that same year—1898—with the defeat of Spain. The guerrilla independence fighters in both struggles were known as *Mambises*.

7. Sempere, founded in 1900, published many books considered left-leaning at the time, including Charles Darwin's, Herbert Spencer's—it was Spencer, not Darwin, who coined the expression "survival of the fittest"—and Ernst Haeckel's—Haeckel popularized Darwin's thinking. In 1914, Sempere joined Vicente Blasco Ibáñez's press to create the Editorial Prometo (Prometheus Press). Blasco was a prolific novelist and active politician, known for his anticlerical and antimonarchist views.

8. Gregorio Marañon was a physician, writer and philosopher, as was Enrique Diego-Madrazo.

9. The "Miracle of Calanda" occurred in 1640 when the Virgin restored Miguel Pellicer's leg, which had been amputated more than two years earlier. Buñuel was always very taken with this local miracle. The "red hordes" to whom he refers, a bit tongue in cheek, must be the anarchist militias that dominated the eastern section of Aragón in the early days of the Civil War. Like other popular militias, they were violently anticlerical.

10. Juan Chabás was a writer of poetry and literary criticism, as well as a friend of the director's.

11. Rafael Sánchez Ventura, a long-time friend of Buñuel's, was from Saragossa and also lived at the Residencia de Estudiantes. He served as assistant director on *Tierra sin pan,* worked in the Republican Embassy in Paris during the Civil War and was exiled in Mexico. He lent Buñuel part of the money to get himself and his family to the U.S. in the fall of 1938. According to Gibson, he became the primary theorist of anarchism in Aragón, but always behind the scenes (120).

12. As he often did, Buñuel is confusing don Lope, from *Tristana,* with don Jaime, from *Viridiana,* both of them older men in love with younger women. It is don Jaime who administers the drug to the young Viridiana.

13. This would have happened in 1936, when Calanda was dominated by the anarchists.

14. Francisco Ferrer was involved in left-wing activity in Barcelona in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He became interested in pedagogy and founded the Modern School in Barcelona. The school was free of clerical bias, emphasizing humanistic and scientific studies, and was a thorn in the side of conservative politicians and clergymen. Although not in Barcelona at the time, he was accused of being active in the 1909 Barcelona uprising that, with the concomitant government crack-down, became known as the Tragic Week. Ferrer was condemned in a kind of show trial and executed in October of that year.

15. In 1917 the two most powerful unions called for a general strike, and the Catalonian parties called for autonomy and for parliamentary reform in Madrid. After some time, the army put an end to the unrest. On 13 September 1923, Miguel Primo de Rivera, then Captain General of Catalonia, executed a *coup d'état.* He assumed power with the acquiescence of the king, the clergy, most of the military, the industrialists and most conservative groups. The ensuing dictatorship lasted until 1930.

16. Eduardo Dato, three times Prime minister, took a hard line with strikers and subversives. He was assassinated by the anarchists—Román Casanellas, Pedro Mateu and Luis Nicolau—on 8 March 1921, as he was driven past the Puerta de Alcalá in Madrid. Years earlier, in 1912, José Canalejas, the prime minister at the time, was assassinated for basically the same reasons. The War of the Rif, fought to protect and enlarge Spanish territory in the Rif area of northwestern Africa, lasted from 1921 to 1926, with extremely high Spanish casualties. Buñuel threatened to desert when his regiment was to be called up, but a counter-order saved the day. Gurugú, a mountain near Melilla, was the scene of one of those battles.

17. "The Fair of the Dove" and "Water, sugarcubes and grain alcohol" (a common drink) were *zarzuelas,* the comic operettas so popular in Spain at the time.

18. There is some confusion here. Aub describes the first poem (about the fair) as unpublished (which appears to be the case) and this one as coming from "the same book," *Libro de poemas*; however, "Paisaje sin canción" actually comes from a book entitled *Suites*. The poems in this collection were written between early 1921 and August 1923, but not published until 1983 (Christopher Maurer, ed. *Federico García Lorca: Collected Poems*, 899), so the 1924 poem was written later than the series that would become *Suites*.

19. I have relied on the taped interview—which itself is full of breaks and at times hard to follow—to supplement this section of the published *Conversaciones* (Fundación Max Aub, Cinta 15-A, transcription, 1–4).

20. Pancho Gutiérrez Cossío, Manolo Ángeles Ortiz, Hernando Viñes, Ismael González de la Serna and Joaquín Peinado were painters. They were part of a group of Spanish artists living in Paris who met regularly at cafes like La Rotonde and soon became friends of

Buñuel's. In *L'Âge d'or*, Cossío, who had a limp, would play the lame bandit, and Ortiz, the gamekeeper who shoots his son. Ortiz and Peinado are interviewed later.

21. Denise Tual was a French film editor, producer and director. Her first husband was Pierre Batcheff, star of *Un Chien andalou.*

22. Carlos Saura's film, *Llanto por un bandido* (*Weeping for a Bandit*), was shot in 1963, hot on the heels of the scandal over *Viridiana* and the Spanish government's refusal not only to release that film, but also to allow any reference to it in the press, hence the assistant director's concern. José (Pepe) Bergamín and Vicente Aleixandre were both poets. Aleixandre won the Nobel Prize in 1977.

23. Meller, a Spanish singer and film star with an international following; Jacques Feyder, a well known Belgian director, who worked primarily in Paris.

24. Dámaso Alonso, a Spanish poet, philologist, translator, literary critic and, for many years, Director of the Spanish Royal Academy. Amado Alonso was another well known Spanish critic and philologist (if not a poet) of the same generation, mentioned just below here because of the last name.

25. According to Joaquín Peinado, interviewed in this same book, the father had a business in rubber goods. Jeanne says that he was an accountant at a factory, which probably accounts for the two versions (*Memorias* 17).

26. Juan Vicens, a close friend of Buñuel's from Saragossa and the Residencia, would own the Librería Española (Spanish Bookstore) in Paris, where Jeanne Rucar's sister and, at one point, Jeanne herself—whose salary was secretly paid by Buñuel—worked. A member of the Communist Party, Vicens ended his days working with a team of Spaniards at a radio station in Beijing. José María Uzelay, mentioned just below, was another Spanish painter.

27. Jean Epstein, a filmmaker and theorist of cinema, had founded the school with his sister Marie. It was primarily intended to teach acting, which was not of real interest to Luis. Buñuel asked the director to take him on as a helper, for free, on his next film (*Mauprat*) so that he could learn film technique. Epstein's theoretical writings had already become a major influence on the way Buñuel looked at cinema. (See Sánchez Vidal, *BLD* 107–109 and 139–142 for more details.)

28. Ultraísmo was an avant-garde poetic movement, based roughly on Italian Futurism and founded in Madrid in 1918. Its members included Rafael Cansinos-Assens, Pedro Garfías, Juan Larrea and Gerardo Diego among others. Jorge Luis Borges, Vicente Huidobro and Ramón Gómez de la Serna had some connection with them. Buñuel published a prose poem, "Una traición incalificable" (An unspeakable betrayal)—his first publication—in the penultimate number of *Ultra* (Gibson 135). They founded a number of poetic journals.

29. This is Camille Goemans, the well known Belgian art dealer, who had already signed a contract with Dalí. Both he and the Belgian surrealist painter René Magritte took their wives, as did the French surrealist poet Paul Éluard (born Eugène Paul Grindel), who was married to Gala (Helena Diakova, the Russian he had met when both were teenagers interned in a sanatorium in Switzerland). Dalí had grown up spending his summers at the house his family kept in Cadaqués on the coast above Barcelona. René Crevel, mentioned just before, was a poet and writer. Sometimes a surrealist, sometimes a Dadaist, he wound up committing suicide (discussed again later).

30. Recent articles and books have shown that Dalí played a very big part in contributing ideas for the screenplay. See, especially, Hammond, *L'Âge d'or.*

31. Ramón Gómez de la Serna, celebrated for his great wit (especially in the series of miniature prose pieces known as "greguerías") was an important influence on Buñuel in the filmmaker's early days and is often just referred to here as Ramón. He had promised to write a script for the director, but he was slow to come up with it, and in the meantime Buñuel and Dalí wrote *Un Chien.*

32. The first was a 1914 Max Linder film, part of the *Max* series; the second, a 1914–15 series directed by Louis Gasnier, a French director who worked primarily in the U.S. Gasnier's series was also known in France as *Les Mystères de New York*.

33. Friedrich (Fritz) Lang, a Viennese filmmaker who left Germany for Paris and then, shortly after, the United States, where he worked for many years in Hollywood and was seminal in the development of American *film noir.* He was one of Buñuel's heroes. When the director was in Hollywood for the release of *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (1972), he visited the ailing Lang and got him to sign a photograph of himself.

34. In a letter to Pepín Bello, Buñuel describes the surrealist Péret as "the greatest poet of our era and, indeed, of all the eras put together." As an example of the reason he (and Dalí) were so taken with Péret's verse he gives various lines including their favorite: "Is it true that mortadella is made by blindmen?" (Sánchez Vidal, *BLD* 194).

35. Like the director, the painter was a native of Aragón. Ramón del Valle-Inclán, the renown novelist and playwright, had developed an interest in film, thanks, in part, to Buñuel's influence. For more on this unfilmed film, see the Alberti interview.

36. This is a little misleading. Dalí had jotted down the idea for what would be *Un Chien andalou* on the back of a shoebox. He called Buñuel in Paris to drop the newspaper concept and come to Cadaqués to work on his idea. The shoebox has been lost, but Buñuel admitted Dalí's "protagonism" in the "conception of the film" in a letter written to Dalí of 24 June 1929 (Gibson 278 and 753).

37. According to Gibson, there is no record of his receiving help from Marie Epstein.

38. Charles and Marie Laure de Noailles were great patrons of the arts and would sponsor *L'Âge d'or.*

39. All of these are examples of the pulp fiction—including comic strips—and pulp film in serial format. Both forms were hugely popular and had an international following. Eugène Sue published *Les Mystères de Paris,* in 90 episodes in 1842–1843. *The Exploits of Elaine*, as we have already seen, was a film serial of 1914–1915. Rocambole was a character featured in Pierre Alexis Ponson du Terail's series that ran from 1855 to 1870 in France. Starting in the late nineteenth century and extending into the 1960s, the detective Nick Carter was featured in numerous series and formats, including the comic strips mentioned here, primarily in the U.S. Judex was the eponymous hero of a French film series of 1916–1917, and Fantômas, the eponymous villain of another French series (1916), both by the same director, Louis Feuillade. *The Black Coin,* directed by Albert Herman, came out in 1936.

40. He is playing with the quotation from Ricardo de

Vega's comic operetta *La Verbena de la paloma* in which a character says that "the sciences advance by leaps and bounds."

41. Mark Polizzotti describes this collaboration between Philippe Soupault and André Breton in some detail. It took several different forms, coinciding only in part with Buñuel and Dalí's effort (105–110). I have found no references to a collaboration between Tristan Tzara—one of the founders of Dadaism and, later, a surrealist—and the French *avant-garde* painter Francis Picabia, who joined forces with surrealism only briefly.

42. The dictator—1923–30—was known for a certain hail-fellow-well-met quality.

43. Eugenio D'Ors, a Catalonian writer, art critic, philosopher and journalist, became an apologist for the Franco Regime. Ernesto Giménez Caballero, writer, film director and journalist, founded *La Gaceta Literaria* (The Literary Gazette) in 1927. He published various articles by, and about, Buñuel in its pages and also ran a film club before becoming a founding member of the Falange. Enrique Diez Canedo, poet, translator and literary critic. *Le Surréalisme au service de la Révolution* (Surrealism in the service of revolution) was the second of three journals published by the surrealist group.

44. I have not been able to locate the incident mentioned here. Breton played a few unpleasant pranks on Cocteau and, according to Mark Polizzotti, nourished "a lifetime of loathing for Cocteau" (57–58 and 232). No matter what he says here, Buñuel maintained contact with Cocteau over the years and, on Cocteau's death, apparently at the director's own request, was sent a photograph of his dead friend, along with assurances of Cocteau's great admiration for his work (AB 583.1–2).

45. Christian Zervos was an art critic, writer, publisher and editor (of *Cahiers d'Art*—Notebooks on art—to which Buñuel contributed a film page) and champion of *Un Chien andalou*. Both he and the musician Georges Auric were close to the Noailles. Igor Stravinsky, composer, pianist and conductor, wrote often for the ballet. In 1939, he moved to Hollywood with the idea of composing for the cinema, but his determination to retain artistic control didn't jibe well with the collaborative nature of film work, and he wound up recycling most of his film efforts into independent works; Buñuel's intuition seemed to have been good.

46. For a time, Éluard and Gala shared their lives with Max Ernst, the German visual artist and member of the surrealist group in a *ménage à trois*. The Italian painter Giorgio de Chirico was an influence on the surrealists and at one point joined the group, but they disparaged his later work, and he dropped out. Man Ray, as we've seen, was part of the group.

47. As we've seen, he's not telling the whole truth about this collaboration (265*n*30). Hammond argues that it's not clear which of the collaborators changed the title, nor why. The shooting script was labeled *La Bête andalouse* ('The Andalusian Beast'), suggesting its relation to the earlier film. Buñuel wrote to Bello that he would prefer to call it "¡Abajo la constitución!" ('Down with the constitution!') (Hammond 24). Gibson discusses the title in some detail (203–205). Actually, Dalí's objection to a title change may refer to the short version of the film Buñuel made without consulting him titled *Dans les eaux glacées du calcul egoïste,* which was, as that title indicates, aimed at consumption in communist film clubs. See 278*n*79 for more detail.

48. Christian Bérard, also known as Bébé, was a theatrical designer and fashion illustrator, known for his openly gay lifestyle. He was part of a group of homosexuals active in the art scene, including Cocteau, who were friends and beneficiaries of the viscounts. The "castle" was an ultra-modern and ultra-luxurious mansion built within the ruins of the abbey. The film showings took place in the Noailles' equally luxurious Paris house on the Place des États-Unis. Here they had installed the first "talking picture" theater in the capitol.

49. Like *Un Chien, L'Âge* shows the influence of the American silent comedies. Buñuel also borrows motifs from Hollywood films glorifying impossible love affairs. On top of his attraction to particular genres, Buñuel emulated what Hammond calls Hollywood's "no-frills editing and functional photogenia" (37). Hammond argues that "although he played fast and loose with its conventions, Buñuel was a Hollywood man at heart" (37, see 31–42).

50. Actually, she was the viscount's mother, and, according to Hammond, the trip to Rome to visit the pope was just a fabrication (64). *Conversaciones con Buñuel* says that she went to Rome to ask the pope to excommunicate her son, but this is clearly a typo or a misunderstanding of the tape.

51. Four days after its public première on 30 November 1930, at Studio 28, right-wing groups disrupted the performance with a violent attack. Jean Chiappe, the Prefect of Police of Paris, had the censors re-review the film and ban it. Gaston Bergery and Aimé Berthod, both Radical socialist deputies, and André Berthon, a Communist, used the government shut-down of the film as a point-of-departure for their campaign against censorship. Noailles, who was horrified to find himself at the center of the scandal, wanted only to stay out of the press. Buñuel respected his wishes. The film was shown only privately and in film clubs for fifty years until, finally, in 1980, the year of his death, the viscount allowed the distribution rights for France, Britain and the United States to be auctioned off (Hammond 64 and 68–69).

52. At the time he made *L'Âge d'or*, which came out early in the days of sound film—it was billed as both *sonore et parlant*, meaning it included background sounds and speaking voices—Buñuel had no experience in that area. He turned for help to Jacques-Bernard Brunius and Claude Heymann, who at the respective ages of twenty-four and twenty-three, did have that experience. Later, largely through his experience directing dubbing, Buñuel would become adept at sound techniques.

53. "Danger: Do not lean out," a notice posted in metros throughout Paris. In an interview with the Cuban film critic (under the pseudonym G. Caín) and novelist Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Buñuel cites this possible title in relation to *Un Chien andalou.* He says that they first considered this as a title, then favored its opposite: "Danger: Do not lean in," but that Dalí then suggested they use the title of an unpublished book of poems by Buñuel: "Un Chien andalou" (Cabrera Infante 58).

54. In 1974 Buñuel reckoned there were seven pirated copies in existence (Hammond 60–69).

55. The son of the former dictator (Miguel Primo de Rivera) and the founder of the Spanish Falange. The first

volume of Foxá's series was entitled *Madrid, de corte a cheka* (Madrid, from the capitol to the secret prison, 1938) is a novel involving the years just preceding, along with the beginning of, the Civil War.

56. As both Aub and Buñuel indicate, the philosophical-pornographic writings of Donatien Alfonse François Marquis de Sade had an enormous effect on the surrealists, particularly—at least in Buñuel's case—because of Sade's emphasis on complete freedom unfettered by any sense of morality. References, both direct and oblique, to his work surface throughout Buñuel's canon.

57. Jean Painlevé, a French documentary filmmaker and biologist, has no film entitled *Homage to Luis Buñuel,* but he did on one occasion show Buñuel a film depicting a real eye operation, with the outcome Buñuel describes here (Masaki and McDougall xvi).

58. Libertad Lamarque, an Argentine, played melodramatic roles and was tremendously popular. She starred in *Gran Casino,* Buñuel's first film in Mexico.

59. Maxime Alexandre, a member of the surrealist circle, published *Memoires d'un surrealist* in 1968.

60. The Society of Courses and Conferences featured not only the German ethnologist Leo Frobenius, but other speakers of the same quality: Albert Einstein, Marie Curie, H. G. Wells and Howard Carter, to name a few, so it was an honor for the young Buñuel to be included. His presentation was a huge success, as he indicates here. Alberto Jiménez Fraud was the director of the Residencia; Manuel García Morente, the Catholic philosopher, was as Buñuel indicates, involved primarily as a friend of José Ortega y Gasset, the well known philosopher and writer.

61. The vote in the municipal elections on 12 April 1931 made way for the exile of King Alfonso XIII and for the proclamation of the Second Republic two days later. The anarchists (a powerful group in Aragón) and the, at that time, very small Communist Party would reject the republic as strictly bourgeois.

62. Grigor Aleksandrov and Sergei Eisenstien's 1929 film examines the way new technology—in this case, a tractor—affects rural life. Maurice Legendre wrote *Les Jurdes,* an investigation of that area of Spain (Las Hurdes) in 1927.

63. The wave of anticlerical violence that led to the burning of about one hundred buildings associated with the Catholic Church, along with considerable loss of life, actually took place in 1931, between the tenth and thirteenth of May. It is usually referred to as the Burning of the Convents.

64. Born in Moscow as Ella Kagan, she wrote several novels in Russian, married André Triolet, a French cavalry officer, and moved to France. She later divorced Triolet and married Aragon, whom she influenced to join the French Communist Party.

65. This was in March 1932 just before six of the members, including Aragon and Buñuel, left the surrealist group. The pamphlet in question is Breton's *Misère de la poésie: "L'Affaire Aragon" devant l'opinion publique* (The impoverishment of poetry: the Aragon affair in public opinion), in which he accused "Front rouge" (Red Front), the poem Aragon had written in praise of Stalinist culture, of being a mere occasional piece (Gubern and Hammond 100–101).

66. According to a letter written by Buñuel's friend Pierre Unik, a member of the French Communist Party, and sent to Maurice Thorez, the general secretary of that party, on 30 January 1932 (and discovered in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France by this writer), Buñuel was a member of the Spanish Communist Party. Gubern and Hammond conjecture that he probably joined during his three-month stay in Spain, from late October 1931 to late January 1932 (97–98). After decamping to the United States in late 1938 when he saw the Civil War was lost, Buñuel began to deny his membership in the Party, as he would do for the rest of his life.

67. A reactionary Republican, Ricardo Samper was President of the Council of Ministers from April to October 1934. The film was actually shot in the spring of 1933.

68. Gubern and Hammond argue that, in fact, the Republican government (Luis Araquistáin was the Republican ambassador to Paris for part of the Civil War) did not pay for the sonorization of the film. It was done by the producers Pierre Braunberger and Charles Goldblatt; Goldblatt was head of La Propagande par le Film, a company belonging to the French Communist Party (177). Originally named *Las Hurdes,* for the area in which it was made and also the title of Maurice Legendre's "study of human geography," it was sonorized and released in Europe under the catchier title *Tierra sin pan,* the name which will be used in this text.

69. Paul Vaillant-Couturier was a staunch member of the French Communist Party and very active in the AEAR (Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists), as well as the sometime editor of the communist newspaper *L'Humanité*. The celebrated novelist Gide was, at the time, sympathetic to their goals. The Soviets wanted to make a film of his novel *Les Caves du Vatican* as a satire on the bourgeoisie and the Church, and they wanted Buñuel in as co-scriptwriter and director. Gide was concerned about the changes Louis Aragon and others wanted him to make in the film to emphasize its attack on the Church, so he backed out of the project, bringing it to an end (Gubern and Hammond 147). Gide did travel to the Soviet Union and that same year (1936) published a less than enthusiastic description of the trip entitled *Retour de l'U.R.R.S* (*Return from the U.S.S.R.*). As to Buñuel, he had been working in the Spanish dubbing unit of Paramount in Paris. When he got a better offer From Warner Brothers to work in Madrid, he accepted.

70. The Second International Writers Conference for the Defence of Culture was held in Madrid, Valencia and Barcelona, in the summer of 1937, in the midst of the Civil War. The Soviet Union was providing massive aid to the Spanish Republican cause, not, of course, without its own interests in mind. Since the U.S., France and Britain had adopted a hands-off stance, the Soviet aid was critical.

71. In its effort to cultivate European filmmakers, M-G-M invited a number of them, including Buñuel, to come to Hollywood as observers (for six months, in Luis's case). They would be paid without having to work. Many of them remained in Hollywood, but Buñuel viewed the offer as a free vacation. Ever the surrealist, he regarded the Hollywood system and commercial film in general, with distaste and put an early end to his time there by insulting both the powerful Irving Thalberg and the actress. This was designed to be a memorable surrealist gesture, and it became part of what would be the Buñuel myth.

He resigned before being dismissed and arranged that Frank Davis would write him a warm letter, commending his (nonexistent) work with M-G-M to safeguard himself in case he should ever want to return. Davis was a producer and screenwriter with the company and at that time was also serving as Supervisor of Spanish Dubbing (although Buñuel was actually in the French Department since he'd been contracted in France). He would remain a friend. Buñuel kept the letter until his death and obviously had cause to use it in 1938–39. His story of being black-listed at that time is apocryphal (Martín 88–107).

72. Actually, as we've seen, it was filmed in the spring of 1933. Acín, an anarchist friend of the director's, was executed during the Civil War. Apparently Buñuel lent or gave him the money for the lottery number with the agreement that, if he won, Acín would finance the film. Improbably enough, he did win. Acín expected to actually make a profit and, undoubtedly, to help the anarchist cause, but during the two years of conservative Republican government under Alejandro Lerroux (November 1933-February 1936), the film was banned for giving a bad image of Spain. By the time it was released and distributed in 1936, Acín had been executed. The king had visited Las Hurdes in 1922 to express his concern over the poverty in that area.

73. Alejandro Lerroux was Prime minister three times between 1933 and 1935, adopting an increasingly right-wing and demagogic position.

74. It was actually shown, in a silent version with an improvised commentary by Buñuel in Madrid in December 1933, as part of a film-society program; in Saragossa in June 1934 and in Madrid again in the spring of 1936. A sonorized version was released for regular distribution in French and shown in Paris beginning in December 1936, as well as other European countries. Both the English and French versions were intended to elicit international help for the Republican cause. This commentary takes a very different position from the one first written by Buñuel and Unik (who worked on both) and never sonorized, which was intended to shame the Republic for ignoring the poverty in Spain. (See Herrera, *Estudios passim* and Gubern and Hammond 153–180.)

75. Ricardo Urgoiti founded Filmófono with Buñuel. He had already founded the very successful Radio Unión.

76. Carlos Arniches, a playwright popular for comedies that included *Don Quintín, el amargao* (see 276*n*49).

77. Francis Jourdain was a member of the French Communist Party. Both Hernando and Loulou were close friends of the Buñuels, but Jeanne does not appear in the photograph, apparently stuck at home. Pepín Bello was a close friend of Buñuel, Lorca and Dalí during, and following, their days at the Residencia and, as Sánchez Vidal has shown, was the source of many of the ideas in Buñuel and Dalí's work (*BLD passim*). José Moreno Villa, a poet and artist lived at the Residencia although he was considerably older than the students. Like so many others, he was exiled in Mexico and remained a close friend of the director's.

78. Roman Karmen, Soviet camera-man and film director.

79. Germaine Montero, a French actress and singer. Finkie (Rafael), the son of Luis Araquistáin. Ángel Ossorio and Marcelino Pascua, mentioned in the same paragraph, also served as Republican ambassadors in Paris during the war.

80. The French established concentration camps in France and in their territories abroad for German Jews, leftist political leaders and Spanish Republicans. Aub was held at Djelfa in Algeria.

81. Willi Münzenberg, a political activist and leader of the German Communist Party up until 1937.

82. André Thirion was a French writer, part of the surrealist group and a militant communist during the 1930s. Georges Sadoul, a French journalist and film writer, was part of the surrealist group. He too became a communist in the 1930s. Sadoul and Buñuel remained friends over the years, and he contributed many articles on Buñuel's films to the French press.

83. Bosch remains a mystery; however, Paul Hammond's "educated guess" is that the Hapsburg fellow could be Arthur Koestler, a German-speaking Hungarian Communist (Hapsburg because he was from the Austro-Hungarian Empire) who worked with Buñuel and Aub at the embassy in Paris and later became a "virulent anti-communist." Hammond surmises that this very public change of heart may explain Buñuel's contempt (e-mail of 25 November 2015).

84. This traditional movement, based in the Basque region of Spain, fought for the Franco side during the Civil War.

85. Ogier Preteceille, a contributor to left-leaning journals and official with the UGT (General Union of Workers), became Araquistaín's private secretary in Paris.

86. The receipts are not included in the Buñuel Archive although he generally held on to that kind of thing. It is not entirely clear whether he actually did repay the debt. In his favor, he did return the money Ramón Acín invested in *Tierra sin pan* albeit many years later, giving part of it to Acín's two daughters when he was in Spain in 1961, and sending on the rest from Mexico. In his archive are letters from both daughters thanking him for the repayment. As another example of eventual repayment, it took Ricardo Urgoiti, the head of Filmófono, many years to return money owed to Buñuel for his investment in and work for that business.

87. Juan Rejano, a poet and journalist who militated in the Spanish Communist Party, published a slim journal, focused on the arts, in Mexico between 1951 and 1955. Buñuel does figure as a member of the editorial board. This was, at most, only an ancillary reason for why his travels to and from the United States were so tightly controlled. From well before 1946—i.e., before the days of Joe McCarthy's witch hunt and his own departure for Mexico—the FBI had been aware of his communist past and had kept an eye on him. He was denied a visa twice in the 1950s and allowed the first one in 1959. From then on until 1970, his travel to the United States (for work on *The Young One* or to visit his sons) or through the United States, where he stopped over, usually in New York, on his trips to and from Europe, was tightly controlled. In 1970 the U.S. began to relax its restrictions. The last document related to his U.S. visits dates from 1972, when he was invited to Lincoln Center by the New York Film Festival. In his remaining years, he was treated as any other foreign visitor (Martín 783–792).

88. Juan Ibáñez made a film in Mexico of the Valle-Inclán play *Divine Words* (1919) in 1978. The competition

in France which the young people were attending must have involved the play, not the film, but Ibáñez was apparently connected.

89. The CNT or Confederación Nacional de Trabajo (National Confederation of Labor), an anarchist labor union, fought on the Republican side during the Civil War. Eugenio Imaz was a philosopher. Ricardo Muñoz Suay was at that time the leader of the Federación Universitaria Española and a communist activist. Bergamín, the poet, was the president of the Alianza de Intelectuales Antifascistas (Alliance of Antifascist Intellectuals, usually just referred to as la Alianza de Intelectuales).

90. Buñuel has his encyclicals confused. The *Rerum Novarum* was sent out by Pope Leo XIII in 1891 and dealt with questions of social justice. What the Republicans diffused was Pope Pius XI's 1937 encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* (With Burning Concern), written in German and critical of the Reich (although he doesn't actually mention Hitler or the Nazi Party).

91. Juan Negrín, head of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and prime minister of the Spanish Republic from 1937 until its defeat by the Franco forces in April 1939.

92. Edgar Neville, a Spanish playwright and filmmaker. That he was heading to Burgos in northern Spain, which was a bastion of the Franco regime, showed where his sympathies lay. The Spanish Tourist Office in Paris became the Propaganda Office.

93. The writer Ramón Pérez de Ayala served as ambassador to London from 1932 to 1936. Manuel Azaña, served as prime minister of the Republic twice and as president during the war. Both men were Republicans without being "lefties."

94. Luis Lacasa Navarro was at the Residencia de Estudiantes with Buñuel. An architect, he collaborated on the design of the Spanish Pavilion at the 1937 Paris International Exposition. After the war, he sought asylum in Moscow, where he remained until his death in 1966.

95. As Rafael Alberti testifies in his interview, they did in fact know each other more than a little from some point in the twenties.

96. Jean-Claude Carrière was Buñuel's co-writer on all his late French films, starting with *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre.* For the Spanish *Tristana*, coming in the middle of this lot, Buñuel chose Julio Alejandro as his co-writer. In fact, they had written the screenplay much earlier.

97. Mikhail Tukhachevsky, a Red Army leader and a Marshal of the Soviet Union, was a prominent victim of Stalin's purges, as well as Elsa Triolet's brother-in-law.

98. Ione Robinson, a North American artist, was very active in the Spanish Republican cause and had friends in high places. Luis Quintanilla, a Spanish artist, was involved in covert work during the war (an interview comes later). The "Secretary of the Treasury" is probably actually Bernard Baruch, the Wall Street financier and adviser to both presidents Wilson and Roosevelt. He and Robinson were certainly friends and may have been lovers. Charles de Noailles also lent Buñuel money for the trip.

99. Augusto Centeno, fellow Resident in Madrid, one of the founders of the Order of Toledo, and long-term teacher at Princeton.

100. Buñuel is confusing *Blockade,* directed by William Dieterle for Walter Wanger and released in June 1938, some four months before the director set off for America, with *Cargo of Innocence,* to be directed by Frank Davis. However, following the non-interventionist stance of the U.S. government, the Production Code Administration insisted that the film—which was to involve the rescue of orphaned Republican children—should make no reference to the Spanish Civil War. Metro abandoned efforts to make the film in September 1938. *Blockade* would be the last of only three Hollywood films concerning the Civil War actually made during the war. Buñuel may well have written Frank Davis about finding work as an historical adviser and been encouraged to do so, but that would have been some months earlier, before the PCA became so intransigent. Buñuel knew Davis from his stay in Hollywood in 1930–31 (see 267–68*n*71).

101. She was the founder and director of the Museum of Modern Art film library in New York. Buñuel had met her in Paris in the summer of 1936, probably saw her again in London in November 1937, then again—early in his exile—in California before she found him work in New York. A fellow communist, she took Buñuel under her wing and did everything possible to promote his work. (Martín clarifies the European meetings in an e-mail of 18 December 2015).

102. Michel Veber, known professionally as Nino, was a writer and librettist (*Gran Casino* was based on one of his stories, and he had also worked on the screenplay of *Midsummer Night's Dream* for Max Reinhardt, not as Buñuel later says, Max Ophüls, in 1935). He and his wife Yvonne helped the Buñuel family out more than once at this time. Veber's father was a painter, not a playwright. Janet Alcoriza, mentioned just after, the daughter of Hugo Riesenfeld, married Luis Alcoriza, a frequent co-writer with Buñuel and director in his own right. Buñuel would not meet them until he was in Mexico, where they became close friends. Janet was an actress (as Raquel Rojas) and scriptwriter.

103. This is confusing. There was already a film section in MoMA, headed by Iris Barry, but Buñuel did not work for them. Nelson Rockefeller, as head of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, decided to incorporate propaganda films in their communications program in 1940. The OCIAA based its Motion Picture Division at MoMA, but it was not part of the museum. Buñuel was hired as adviser and chief editor for the MPD. He worked, then, *in* MoMA, but not *for* MoMA (Martín 291–302).

104. Jacques Sadoul fought in the Russian Revolution, and was also an active member of the French Communist Party.

105. *The Great Dictator* came out in 1940, so the scene described here happened later. Buñuel is referring to Leni Riefenstahl's *The Triumph of the Will.* She also filmed Hitler's triumphant entry into Poland, but it did not come out as a finished film.

106. Political conservatives (notably Republican Congressman William Prendergast) and Catholics were deeply suspicious of many progressive initiatives connected to Franklin D. Roosevelt's government, including the OCIAA with its Good Neighbor Policy, and also suspicious of MoMA, considered a hive of political progressives—even communists—and *avant-garde* types (all true). Since the Soviet Union was a U.S. ally during World War II, communists, former communists and fellow trav-

elers were not condemned so readily as they would be in the post-war years under the leadership of Senator Joe McCarthy; however, they were considered suspicious, and the FBI kept a file on Buñuel from May 1942 until the late seventies. The OCIAA and MoMA were hounded by *The Motion Picture Herald,* a movie magazine funded by the arch-Catholic Martin Quigley and the Legion of Decency, a Catholic organization also founded by Quigley. Along with Father Daniel Lord, a Jesuit priest, Quigley was largely responsible for establishing the prudish Motion Picture Production Code ("The Code") in 1930. Dalí published *The Secret Life* in English in October 1942. In it, he accuses Buñuel of subverting his own vision of *L'Âge d'or*—this is, of course, untrue—by making it atheist and anticlerical; he also suggests Buñuel's communist affiliation. Buñuel always blamed Dalí for driving him out of his job with the OCIAA (under tremendous pressure from the groups referred to, he resigned in June 1943), but Dalí's book just gave his attackers more ammunition. *L'Âge d'or,* which virtually nobody had seen, had still gained a reputation as a flagrant piece of immorality. The charges of communism and its logical corollary, atheism), along with the very existence of the film did the director in at the OCIAA, but not in the United States. When he finally left the U.S. for Mexico, it was for economic, not ideological, reasons (Martín 421–498).

107. A major strike in 1934 by the miners in Asturias led to brutal government oppression.

108. A traveling theater company that took classic works to the deepest provinces in an effort to educate the populace. Both Ugarte and Lorca were involved.

109. As we've seen, he'd actually joined the Spanish Communist Party by then. The labor unions had formed militias by the beginning of the war.

110. Ramón J. Sender, the novelist and journalist, was first an anarchist and then a communist, before giving up on ideology. Both his wife and brother were executed by Franco's forces. He ended his days in California. Elie Fauré, the art historian, was one of the sponsors for a Franco-Spanish committee that raised funds for Spanish hospitals. Acario Cotapos was a Chilean musician. Claudio de la Torre, an old friend of the director's, was a writer and—as we've seen—also involved in film. Felipe García Ascot, mentioned below, was the secretary for the embassy in Paris and was later executed by the Franco side.

111. Long conflated as *España leal en armas,* these were actually two separate films, as Gubern and Hammond make clear. Both were comprised of news footage from different sources and the first even included some sequences from fiction films. Since the films do not include credits, Gubern and Hammond are offering their best guesses here. Buñuel was more involved in the first *Espagne 1936/España 1936* (Spain 1936). He chose the material and supervised the rough cut and positive print stages, as well as the soundtrack. Gubern and Hammond suggest that Buñuel only served as executive director of the second film *Espagne 1937/España 1937* (Spain 1937). French censorship, which was becoming increasingly cagy about documentaries, refused permission for the second film to be released (274–290, 332–340).

112. Buñuel had known Durán for years. He had been at the Residencia de Estudiantes, was a member of the Order of Toledo, and had worked with Buñuel in the dubbing departments at Paramount in Paris and Warner Brothers in Madrid. His title in New York was Director of Music (Martín 320). Pittaluga knew Buñuel only slightly from Madrid (they overlapped at the Residencia, but Pittaluga was much younger). He had worked at the Spanish Embassy in Washington during the war and stayed on in the U.S. until moving to Mexico (see interview).

113. The Battle of Annual, 22 July 1921, part of the War of the Rif, represented a huge loss for the Spanish army at the hands of Berber combatants. It's referred to in Spain as the Disaster of Annual.

114. "Horizon," a review published by the poets Pedro Garfías, Juan Chabás and J. Rivas Panedas with economic help from Buñuel, among others. It lasted from 1922 to '23 and was intended to join the young poets of "Ultra"—the Ultraístas—with older poets. Buñuel contributed a short prose piece "Instrumentación" (Instrumentation) to the second issue (Gibson 149–150).

115. Eugenio Montes wrote essays and fiction, as well as contributing to various newspapers. His review of *Un Chien,* which came out in Madrid just after he had seen the film in Paris, was particularly illuminating. He joined the Falange in the late thirties.

116. Emilio Prados, Pedro Salinas and Jorge Guillén were all celebrated poets and members of the Generation of '27. Salazar was a composer and musicologist. Moreno Villa is referred to earlier.

117. His sister Conchita shared this ability (Pedro Christian García Buñuel).

118. Victor Brauner, a Romanian painter and sculptor, was involved in the surrealist group for years. He was interested in hypnotism, and one of his better known paintings is "Rupture hypnotique."

119. José María Navaz, who earned a Ph.D. in Natural Sciences in Madrid, coincided at the Residencia with Buñuel and would later serve for many years as Director of the Laboratory of the Oceanographic Society in San Sebastián (Valverde, email of 11 December 2015).

120. Fernández was a celebrated literary critic, journalist and historian; Ciria, a poet in the Ultraísta vein. Marcelino Pascua, a member of the Order of Toledo, would become the Director of Health Services and later, as we have seen, ambassador in Paris.

121. Gibson points out that this could not have happened after Buñuel returned from the U.S. in 1931, because Dalí left Madrid definitively in 1926. He argues that the incident probably took place the last time the three friends were all together, in May 1926 (211). Lorca wrote *Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín* (*The Love of Don Perlimplín and Belisa in the Garden*) in 1925, but it didn't premiere until 1933.

122. That the falling-out was made up so quickly has been disputed. In any event, the narration is strange. If Lorca had gotten dressed up to eat dinner with Eugenio d'Ors and don Alberto Jiménez Fraud, people he considered important, it's unlikely that he would have abandoned them to go out to eat with Buñuel. Although homosexuality was very badly seen at that time and especially in Spain, other more or less open homosexuals coincided with Buñuel at the Residencia, not just Lorca and another poet, Luis Cernuda, but also Prados and Durán, who was at that time very open about his sexuality. Luis's much younger brother, Alfonso, who

would later live at the Residencia, also became openly gay.

123. All writers, primarily poets, involved in the Ultra movement. The foundation of the group in 1918 was impelled in part by the exodus of intellectuals from post-war Europe. Marjan Paszkiewicz and Wladjslaw Jahl were both Poles. Guillermo de Torre married Borges's sister and moved to Argentina when the war started. He became known for his books on avant-garde poetry. There were two Rivas Panedas brothers. As to the titles of their journals, two are clear; the other two are *Grecia* (Greece) and *Tableros* (Tabletops, Planks or Chess Boards).

124. Margarita Xirgu, a celebrated actress; Tomás Borrás, a writer and journalist who also was famous for his avant-garde pantomime *El sapo enamorado* (The Enamored Toad), and La Argentina, who reinvigorated classical Spanish dance.

125. Ángel Samblancat, a fellow Aragonese and a furious anarchist, but also furiously pro-Republic, was known for his extravagant outbursts (Gibson 119). Rafael Cansinos-Assens was a poet in the Hispano modernist vein, but also was important in Ultra.

126. José María Carretero Novillo (1887–1951) wrote an extremely popular column in *La Esfera* ["The Sphere"], in which he referred to himself as "el Caballero Audaz." He was a supporter of Franco during the war.

127. Santiago Ramón y Cajal (1852–1934) won the Nobel Prize in 1906 for his work on the nervous system. Buñuel came to know him as a young student of entomology. *ABC* was (and still is) an important Spanish newspaper.

128. A puppet play by Lorca, known as "The Tragicomedy of Don Cristobita and Miss Rosita."

129. The material from the beginning of this section ("I met Chabás") through the reference to Durán comes not from the book, but from a transcript of one of Aub's tapes at the FMA which has not been digitized: Caja 19–4, 36 that María José Calpe kindly scanned (along with many others) for me. In looking at these pages, I am following a lead given by Martín (324).

130. Américo Castro, a historian of Spanish culture, as well as a philologist and literary critic, gained notoriety for his insistence on the importance of the Islamic and Jewish presence in Spain on Spanish identity. He was a professor at the University of Madrid and, after the Civil War, at various U.S. universities, ending up at Princeton.

131. After saying he remembers nothing he learned about Immanuel Kant, Buñuel reveals that by a young age he had read many of the eighteenth-century French and the nineteenth-century German philosophers. The ten-volume novel *Jean-Christophe* won Romain Rolland a Nobel Prize in 1915.

132. Spanish writers of light fiction that, according to Gibson, were considered risqué at the time (103).

133. Of the less known Russians, Vladimir Dorolensko, Leonid Andreyev and Aleksandr Kuprin all wrote fiction. Kuprin was best known for *The Duel.* Andreyev wrote drama as well. *La Porte entroite* (*The Narrow Door*, 1909) was written by Gide with whom, as we've seen, Buñuel briefly tried to shape a film.

134. "The Review of the Occident," which is still published, is dedicated to cultural and scientific questions.

135. Gibson observes that Buñuel had almost certainly read *La vida de los insectos* (The Life of Insects), a series of excerpts from *Les Souvenirs entomologiques,* by the famous French entomologist Jean-Henri Fabre, which was published in Spain in 1920.

136. He's referring here to the multi-volume *Decline of the West* (1918–1923), the German philosopher's best known work.

137. Carrere, a novelist who was about twenty years older than Buñuel and friends.

138. "The Good-Looking Woman," a book of *glosas,* a certain kind of poem, is probably D'Ors's best known work.

139. Salvador de Madariaga, a distinguished historian, writer and diplomat.

140. Blaise Cendrars, a poet and novelist. Max Jacob, a poet, most famous for *Le Cornet à dés* (*The Dice Cup*, 1917).

141. He gives a short form. The full titles would read: *Les Cent Vingt journées de Sodom* [*The 120 Days of Sodom*], *Justine ou les malheurs de la vertu* [*Justine, or the Misfortunes of Virtue*], *L'Histoire de Juliette, sa soeur* [*Juliette*], *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, [*Philosophy in the Bedroom*], and *Le Dialogue entre un prêtre et un moribond*, [*The Dialogue between a Priest and a Dying Man*].

142. Crevel committed suicide by turning on the gas on 18 June 1935. The marchioness Tota Cuevas de Vera supported the arts financially as well as in other ways. She would have an affair with Buñuel in the mid-thirties (Herrera, "A la sombra de Buñuel" 32–55).

143. In November 1945, Warner Brothers closed the dubbing department, which Buñuel had headed very successfully; after that he tried—to no avail—to find work as a screenwriter or gag writer and dubbed a few films for Vigor Pictures, but was left in Hollywood basically without a job. Denise Tual, whom Buñuel had known from the time of *Un Chien andalou* (she was then married to the star Pierre Batcheff), offered him the chance to direct a film of Federico García Lorca's play *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (*The House of Bernarda Alba*) in Mexico. She had planned to co-produce the film with Oscar Dancigers, another old friend from Paris, who was at that time working in Mexico. Dancigers did not like the play (in fact, neither did Buñuel), but he offered Buñuel the possibility of directing the commercial film described in this text. In the meantime, Tual had decided to shoot *La casa de Bernarda Alba* in France at the end of 1946. Buñuel accepted Dancigers' offer, with the idea of staying only briefly in Mexico, and then pressing on to Paris, where he would shoot the Lorca piece and establish his residence. Tual did not get the backing she expected, and the director, as we know, stayed on in Mexico for the next thirty-seven years (Martín 698–706).

144. Jorge Negrete, one of the most popular Mexican movie stars of all time, played a singing *charro* (big hat and spurs) in all his performances. As we've seen, Lamarque was a huge star in Spanish America.

145. Mauricio Magdaleno, a Mexican novelist, playwright, journalist and screenwriter.

146. In spite of the stars and the publicity campaign, *Gran Casino* (1947) turned out to be an artistic and professional disaster although it was moderately successful in economic terms. The years that had passed without his directing a film, along with his ignorance of Mexican

movie conventions, showed; his approach was tentative (Martínez Herranz 527). A review that said as much condemned the film even before it was released (Mendoza).

147. Benito Pérez Galdós, the Spanish novelist, was a great favorite with Buñuel, who based several films, fairly loosely, on his works. *Misericordia* (*Compassion*, 1897) focuses on the life of the poor in Madrid.

148. León Felipe, a Spanish poet, was exiled in Mexico. Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siquieros, were Mexican muralists.

149. Eduardo Ragasol was probably either a distributor or the owner of the Cine Prado. Javier Herrera provides his first name in an e-mail of 12 January 2016.

150. Gustavo Alatriste, a Mexican businessman who started his career in film in 1961 producing *Viridiana*, followed by *El ángel exterminador* and *Simón del desierto*, is interviewed later.

151. He is speaking of *Un Chien andalou, L'Âge d'or* and *Tierra sin pan*, but this last one was shot in Spain and only sonorized in France.

152. Manuel Barbachano Ponce produced *Nazarín,* with Buñuel, along with a number of films with other directors.

153. A generation of writers whose work was greatly affected by the disastrous end of the Spanish American War and the accompanying loss of the colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. The concern with what they saw as the sad state of their country lasted for about two decades after the disaster.

154. Robert Benayoun, Moroccan born French film critic, author and screenwriter.

155. The book is probably *Bilan de la magie* (1963) although he also has another "report" out on magic.

156. Emmanuel Roblès wrote *Cela s'appelle l'aurore* (1952), the novel on which Buñuel's film of the same title—*That Is the Dawn*—was based in 1956. In the rest of the conversation, Buñuel refers to Edmond Ténoudji, who produced the film, and Claude Jaeger, who worked on it as line producer. Roblès is interviewed later.

157. Lucia Bosè, the Italian actress, had married the famous Spanish bullfighter Luis Miguel Dominguín shortly before accepting a role in *Cela s'appelle l'aurore*. It would be her last film until the marriage broke up in 1967. She returned to the screen shortly after and has continued to act ever since then. Georges Marchal was a huge star in France. He became a friend of Buñuel's and appeared in a number of his films.

158. Bonté Romilly Crompton, a woman from an aristocratic—and rich—North American family, was Gustavo Durán's wife. Durán had an amazing career. Born in Barcelona in 1906, he stayed at the Residencia de Estudiantes, studied music and became a composer and musicologist. As Buñuel mentions earlier, he was also an open homosexual at a time when this was almost unheard of. He worked with Buñuel in dubbing in Paris and in Madrid. He joined the Communist Party and became a Republican general during the Spanish Civil War (some accounts say Lieutenant Colonel). A friend of Hemingway's, he was mentioned in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and also portrayed as Manuel in André Malraux's film *L'Espoir/Sierra de Teruel* [*Days of Hope*]. Buñuel hired him to provide music for the films that Rockefeller's organization was sending to Latin America, but he found the work tedious. He made friends in high U.S. circles, was brought into the anti-fascist effort and worked as a spy in Cuba and, probably, Argentina. Thanks to an article in the Spanish newspaper *ABC,* Joe McCarthy learned of his communist activities in the past, and he became a person of interest to the House Un-American Activities Committee. However, he was never charged. In 1946 he joined NATO, and he worked with them until his death, in Greece, in 1969 (Martín 319–323).

159. Néstor de la Torre (1987–1938), a Spanish painter and theatrical designer, working in the symbolist and modernist styles, exhibited extensively in London and Paris, as well as Madrid. From 1929–33, Durán served as his secretary and manager in Paris.

160. By the time Dwight D. Eisenhower became president, in 1953, Durán had been working for NATO for six or seven years. "Murphy" is probably a misnomer for Spruille Braden, a rather dark character, who was ambassador to a number of Spanish American countries under Roosevelt and Truman and also Second Assistant Secretary of State under Truman. Braden was involved in the overthrow of Jácobo Arbenz in Guatemala (e-mail from Martín, 18 August 2015).

161. The American anthropologist Oscar Lewis wrote the book in English, based on recordings of a family living in the slums of Mexico. Buñuel criticized neorealism many times, especially for its lack of interest in the inner life of the characters, but he relied on many Neorealist techniques—notably the use of non-professional actors and of locations related to the events—to achieve a documentary quality in his films. *Los olvidados* (1950) owes its very existence to Vittorio de Sica's *Shoeshine* (1946).

162. Manuel Altolaguirre was a poet—the youngest member of the Generation of '27—and the editor of a series of notable literary journals. Exiled in Mexico, after the Spanish Civil War, he became involved in the film industry, working as a producer and screenwriter; he and Buñuel co-wrote *Subida al cielo,* which he also produced. His second wife, the Cuban heiress María Luisa Gómez Mena, died in the car crash that led to Altolaguirre's death three days later. Paloma was his daughter with his first wife, the Spanish poet Concha Méndez, whose first boyfriend, incidentally, had been Buñuel (Méndez is interviewed later.) Altolaguirre was from Málaga, in Andalusia, hence the accent to which Buñuel alludes.

163. In an e-mail of 11 December 2015, Hammond explains, very persuasively, what he believes to be the letter in question: in March 1932, Dalí sent Buñuel a vitriolic missive (evidently in response to a letter from the director which has been lost and which apparently was a defense of his newly assumed stance *vis-à-vis* the Communist Party and surrealism). Dalí writes, "It's surprising that the mere fact of becoming a member of the Communist Party nullifies all intelligence even in individuals like Aragon and you" (qtd. Gubern and Hammond 102). The critique continues. Buñuel wrote some notes on the letter and then handed it over to Unik, who kept it. Years later, someone from Unik's family lent his entire correspondence with Buñuel to Max Aub, whose wife, Perpetua Barjau, copied the letters by hand (now in the FMA). Hammond surmises that it was during the period Aub actually had the original letters in his possession that he showed this one to Buñuel in an effort to get him to admit to his earlier membership in the Communist Party, hence

Buñuel's reference to his own handwriting (the notes) and repeated denial of membership in the party.

164. This is what one of his fellow prisoners says to Nazarín near the end. In the scene with the laborers, Nazarín offers to work for food. The paid laborers kick him off the site, and as he goes on his way, he hears in the distance the sound of an argument and then a shot: the effect of his "good" action. The corpse appears in the village that is stricken by the plague. He sprinkles holy water on it before realizing that he has no role there. The villagers want medical people, not priests.

165. The play, written in 1844 by José Zorrilla, is a great favorite in Spain and—because it involves characters who return from the dead—is traditionally performed on All Saints' Day. As a young man, Buñuel presented it at least twice at the Residencia de Estudiantes, once in a parodic version with Lorca playing the sculptor and Américo Castro, not as director but as prompter, and another year with Dalí playing his friend and arch-rival don Luis *Mejía*; both times Buñuel reserved the main role for himself. The play was important to Buñuel, in large part because of the rivalry between don Juan and his father. It would surface in subtle ways in a number of his films and, very obviously, in *le charme discret de la bourgeoisie.* The production referred to in this conversation took place in 1960 and involved a number of professional actors. *Locura de amor* (Mad Love, 1855) was written by the Spanish playwright Manuel Tamayo y Baus. The Spanish actress Ofelia Guilmáin another exile, continued her career in Mexico after the Civil War. She had roles in *Nazarín* and *El ángel exterminador.*

166. Luis García Berlanga, the celebrated director of a host of films, perhaps best known for *Bienvenido, Mr. Marshall* (*Welcome, Mr. Marshall,* 1953).

167. *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes y de sus fortunas y adversidades* (*The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes and His Fortunes and Adversities*), published anonymously in Spain in 1554, is generally considered the first picaresque novel. The plot shows little development, other than the protagonist's increasing wiliness and age, but instead follows the series of calamities that befall him as he passes through the hands of a series of unscrupulous masters. In the end, now a grown man, he agrees to marry the maid who both serves and, as we are given to understand, services an archpriest who compensates the husband with a degree of material comfort much lacking in his earlier days. Picaresque novels usually involve some form of travel.

168. In his enormously popular *The Life of Jesus* (1863) Ernest Renan described Jesus as a man rather than a god and dismissed the miracles attributed to him.

169. Serge Silberman (1917–2003) produced all of Buñuel's French films from *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* in 1965 through *Cet Obscure objet du désir* in 1977.

170. The two novelists formed a prominent part of the so-called Boom in Latin-American fiction. Like others in the group they were greatly influenced by Buñuel's work. Fuentes, who lived in Mexico, was involved in some of the films and became a close friend although he was much younger. His first wife, Rita Macedo, performed in *Ensayo de un crimen, Nazarín* and *El angel exterminador.*

171. Rafael Alberti's wife and a writer herself.

172. In the earlier group, Robin George Collingwood, the English philosopher and historian, was best known for *The Idea of History.* For Gaos, see 143–44. The other two need no introduction. Federico Fellini, the Italian director, addressed his own experience in both *8 1/2* and *Amarcord.* Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the Swiss philosopher and writer of the Enlightenment period, wrote two autobiographies—*The Confessions* and *The Reveries of a Solitary Walker*—which are thought to initiate the autobiographical mode, with their emphasis on subjective experience. Later, of course, Buñuel did produce an autobiography, but it was actually written by Carrière, assuming the director's voice and relying on his anecdotes.

173. Toward the end of Franco's regime, tensions between those who sought to liberalize the government and those who resisted reforms were exacerbated by the economic recession of the late sixties. A series of strikes led by labor organizers and demonstrations mounted by university students created an atmosphere of unrest. In early 1969, Franco proclaimed a state of exception throughout the country, suspending the rights to expression and to assembly. Under intense pressure from abroad (the U.S. threatened to withdraw the military bases that were a cash cow for the regime), Franco lifted the state of exception in March of the same year. The conversation Aub reports here would, then, have taken place in early 1969.

174. Julio Alejandro Castro, Spanish refugee, dramatist, poet and screen writer, was one of Buñuel's favorite co-writers. He is interviewed later in this volume.

175. The Spanish actor Fernando Rey starred in a number of Buñuel's films, became a close friend and is interviewed later.

176. The Non-Aggression Pact of 1939 between the Soviet communists and the German Nazis made many Western communists uncomfortable, to say the least. In an effort to appease Hitler in 1938, Neville Chamberlain, the British prime minister, and Edouard Deladier, his French counterpart, along with Mussolini, raised no objection to his annexing parts of Czechoslovakia. In 1956 the Soviets brutally crushed a short-lived revolution in Hungary, and in 1968, the Soviets along with their Warsaw Pact allies invaded Czechoslovakia, putting an end to the liberal reforms of Alexander Dubček.

177. References would place this interview in 1971. *Tristana* was released in 1970. Aub's diary of his return to Spain *La gallina ciega* was published in 1971, and the huge pro-Franco rally to which Buñuel refers below took place on 17 December 1970. It is always possible that parts of what appear to be one interview in the original Spanish version of this book actually are taken from separate interviews.

178. María del Carmen Polo y Martínez-Valdés, First Lady of Meiras, and Franco's wife was hardly likely to throw together an earthy dish for Buñuel.

179. The Spaniards Eduardo Ducay and Joaquín Gurruchaga were the Executive Producers—as Época Films—of *Tristana.* Apparently, they were interested in doing another film with the director.

180. Pittaluga's wife, Ana María Custodio (1908–76), was a Spanish stage and screen actress, who starred in two of the popular films Buñuel produced during his time with Filmófono in the 1930s.

181. Mario Moya Palencia and Emilio Óscar Rabasa were, respectively, Secretary of the Interior and Secretary

of Foreign Affairs in Spain. Moya was appointed on 8 November 1969; Rabasa, on 1 December 1970.

182. Jean-Paul Sartre, French man of letters and public intellectual, who remained politically active although he shifted from a Soviet to a Maoist stance and ended up defending anarchism.

183. Both countries were plunged in situations of great economic hardship at the time. In Poland, public protests were dealt with brutally, and in Cuba the Soviets exchanged increased economic aid for greater intervention in Cuban affairs.

184. "Where Friends Gather": Aub gives the title in French, referring, no doubt, to Max Ernst's 1922 painting of the same name, where he shows the surrealists of the time. There is also a popular bar in Montmatre with that name.

185. Arrabal's title, which is actually *¡Viva la muerte!* (*Long Live Death!*) comes from the Francoist general José Millán Astray, who, in a debate with Miguel de Unamuno, famously first pronounced "Death to Traitorous Intellectuals" (usually misquoted as "Death to Intelligence") and then followed up with the second pronouncement.

186. Max Ernst played the bandit chief, and José Llorens Artigas, the governor in *L'Âge d'or.*

187. They're playing with weather conditions. When the Spanish Armada was sunk off the coast of England due to a storm, Felipe II, the Spanish king, said, "I didn't send my ships to fight against the elements." Aub and Buñuel go from "elementos" (elements) to "alimentos" (food). Thanks to Manuel García Castellón for the original quote.

188. The surrealists skewered France (1844–1924) for his careful style, common sense, balanced views, patriotism and public honors in a collective pamphlet *Un Cadavre*, published soon after his death. Zola was famous for his practice of literary naturalism in the novel and the theater and for *J'accuse,* the pamphlet attacking the French military for its false conviction (based on anti-Semitism) of Alfred Dreyfus for sedition (the pamphlet, in turn, led to Zola's false conviction of criminal libel).

189. These modern-day Spanish painters spent significant portions of their adult lives in France and, in the case of Dalí, New York as well. From the late nineteenth though the mid-twentieth centuries, Paris was considered the cultural capitol of the western world. Velázquez and Murillo flourished at a time when Spain was, culturally, economically and politically, at the top of its game. This "Golden Age" began a sharp decline in the later seventeenth century when Spain had squandered the money from the New World on foreign wars in Europe and lost its clout, hence the lamentation about Galdós. Unlike the novelist, Goya, even though he lived through a low point in Spanish history (the Napoleonic wars), has always been widely recognized outside Spain.

190. Felipe Cossío del Pomar, the Peruvian artist, spent some time in Paris collaborating with the surrealists. He was actually neither a cripple nor a dwarf (ironically, Buñuel's close friend Pancho Cossío *was* crippled). Mentioned just below are Fernando María de Milicua, a poet, art critic, militant communist and occasional actor, and Joan Castanyer, a painter, writer, decorator and filmmaker.

191. Buñuel received money from his mother and also payments from Filmófono, the company he worked for as a producer in Madrid in 1935 and 1936. Buñuel had invested in the company, and the four films they made were popular successes. Albert Camus's *The Plague* is from 1947.

192. Jean Giono's 1951 novel (*The Horseman on the Roof*) about the Italian struggle for independence in the midst of a cholera pandemic was filmed in 1995 by Jean-Paul Rappeneau.

193. The first is the foundation of Jewish mystical thought; the second, stemming from the *Zohar,* is an essential part of Jewish thought, but also developed occultist and other readings.

194. Vladimir Mayakovsky, a staunch Leninist, who nonetheless was critical of Soviet censorship. A poet, playwright and actor, he committed suicide in 1930.

195. Buñuel, then, started to read Sigmund Freud, shortly after his works began to appear in Spanish (1922). *The Interpretation of Dreams* came out in Spanish in 1924, coinciding with the publication (in French) of the first surrealist manifesto, which made clear the group's debt to the founder of psychoanalysis (Gibson 177).

196. This is from "Pour un Art révolutionaire independent ("For an Independent Revolutionary Art"), the manifesto Breton and Trotsky wrote together in Mexico in 1936 (trans. Polizzotti 163). The anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss took a dim view of creativity.

197. Solita was the wife of the Spanish historian Juan Marichal and the daughter of the Spanish poet Pedro Salinas, who died in Boston.

198. For this interview about dreams, I am relying on a transcription rather than Álvarez's edition. In it Buñuel uses stronger language than we see in the greater part of the book, which suggests either that, in general, language in the interviews has been cleaned up (FMA Entrevistas Buñuel Cinta 35, Cara B, pp. 1–10) or, as Peire suggests, that in this case, and perhaps a few others, Buñuel wasn't aware that he was being recorded (17).

Part II

1. Cuenca, a beautiful small city, is known for houses built on the edge of cliffs. Obviously, the cliffs afforded the opportunity for the kind of latrine described here, but, as Leonardo makes clear, they were not limited to Cuenca.

2. Jaume Otero, a sculptor, played a bit part in the film.

3. Actually, he dubbed films for Paramount in their studios at Joinville in Paris, becoming head of the Spanish department. He was secretive about "selling out" to commercial interests (Gubern and Hammond 137). As to Lya Lys, she was born in Berlin of Russian parents (her real name was Natalia Lyecht). She was contracted by M-G-M in Hollywood to act in the French versions of U.S. films about the same time Buñuel was contracted (1930), but she continued to act in French versions and, ultimately made a few English-language films. She retired in 1942 and spent the rest of her life in the U.S., as Nathalie Montague, until her death in 1986 (Gibson 381 and Martín 64 and 66).

4. Cunard, the passenger line heiress, was an editor as well. A former lover of Aragon and close to the surrealist group, she arranged for a showing of *L'Âge d'or* (not

Un Chien) in London, where it created quite a stir (Gibson 473).

5. Except for Buñuel, Dalí, Jeanne, Llorens Artigas and a few others.

6. I have interpolated this paragraph from another discussion of hunting, a few pages down in the 1885 book, which I have otherwise omitted.

7. The story about the cigars may well be true, but Buñuel could hardly have searched the hospitals of France for his friend unless this happened during the war when he was working at the embassy or after he began to return to France in the 1950s.

8. During the Second Republic, he would be the Director General of Fine Arts throughout Spain.

9. José María Dorronsoro became an agronomist.

10. Miguel Asín Palacios, also from Aragón, was a noted arabist. I have found no reference to Agustín Catalán. This may be a reference to Miguel Antonio Catalán, a spectroscopist from Saragossa, who was six years older than Buñuel. In her interview, Concha Méndez claims that she and Luis were introduced by Miguel Catalán in San Sebastián.

11. Most of the records relating to Buñuel's studies in Madrid were destroyed during the Civil War. He joined the Royal Spanish Natural History Society in 1918 and is listed in its journal as a student of agronomy with a special interest in entomology, so he must have been admitted to the School of Agronomy at some point. In his brief *Auto-Biography* of 1939 (written in English), he mentions being horrified by the prominent position of math in a curriculum focusing on natural sciences, but says that he stuck with it for three years. It's not clear whether he actually ever entered the School of Industrial Engineers, since he soon switched to Liberal Arts (Gibson 112–113 and 130).

12. Aranda confirms this information as coming from Buñuel himself (cited in Gibson 522).

13. The leftist working men responded to Franco's conservative insurgency by forming militias and initiating their own wave of violence, against the affluent and the Church.

14. In the Tlatelolco part of Mexico City, the government massacred hundreds of student protesters and others on 22 October 1968. Buñuel must have written from Europe. He had finished shooting *La Voie Lactée* a few months earlier.

15. The party was an homage to Hernando Viñes. Both he and his wife Loulou had been extremely helpful to Jeanne in the early months of her pregnancy in Paris at a time when Buñuel was living in Madrid and staying out of the picture as much as possible, and they had both urged him to marry, so Jeanne's absence from the party given for her dear friends is particularly notable (Gibson 570 and 655–57).

16. He proposed the subject for the centenary of Goya's death, to be celebrated in Saragossa. He described the screenplay to Lorca as "commercial … but good for learning my craft" (Gibson 213). According to Gibson, the screenplay shows a sophisticated knowledge of filming techniques. He had been a quick study. The official committee in Saragossa commissioned the screenplay in September of 1926, but this conservative body was apparently put off by Buñuel's insistence, not on Goya's work, but on the "mad" if unrealized love between the painter and the Duchess of Alba. Given their change of heart—made clear to him in February 1927—he offered the screenplay to various producers in 1927 -1928, but it was never made (Gibson 213–218).

17. This trip was made in late September of 1932. The actual shoot was in 1933. Further down, Alberti seems to be confusing what actually happened in the film (the donkey and the goat) with what they saw on their preparatory trip.

18. Carlos Martínez Baena played a clerical figure in *Él, El río y la muerte* and *Ensayo de un crimen.*

19. Cavalcanti didn't share Buñuel's scruples; later he collaborated with Walter Ruttmann on the same idea in *Berlin: Symphony of a Big City* (*Die Sinfonie der Grosstadt*).

20. Hortelano is unidentified. Diego Buigas Dalmau had been part of the group at the Residencia. Joan Castanyer, a Catalonian writer, actor and director, best known for the screenplay of *The Crime of Monsieur Lange* (1936), worked under the French name Jean Castanier.

21. Buñuel's version of *Wuthering Heights*, released in 1954, was called *Abismos de pasión* (Depths of passion) although it is often referred to in Spanish as *Cumbres borrascosas* (i.e., *Wuthering Heights.* He was never satisfied with it, because the cast was so mismatched, but there are a number of memorable scenes. The earlier version was William Wyler's with Laurence Olivier and Merle Oberon (1939).

22. Actually, by that time, Luis and Ramón had decided to make a different film, to be entitled "Caprichos" ("Caprices") and to consist of six or seven short stories. This time Ramón eventually finished the script, but too late. Buñuel was already moving on to his work with Dalí (Gibson 268).

23. Actually, José Luis Sáenz de Heredia was already involved in film. He figured as director of two of the commercial productions made by Filmófono, under Buñuel's close supervision (Buñuel probably did most of the filming of the first, since Sáenz had no experience). He would go on in later years to have a successful career. There are various versions of this story, most of them coinciding along general lines. Despite Ontañón's protestations here, Sáenz de Heredia was apparently in agreement with his cousin's falangist philosophy (Gubern and Hammond 204, 252 and 219).

24. According to Manuel Ángeles Ortiz, in his interview below, they were a French family that had lived in Andalusia.

25. She is thinking of Iris Barry, who created the film section, and was married to Dick Abbot, the Vice-President of the museum.

26. *The Monk* by Matthew Gregory Lewis, a gothic romance (1796). Buñuel had planned on shooting the film, to be titled *El Monje*, in Toledo, but the funding fell through. He wound up selling the script he had written with Jean-Claude Carrière to Ado Kyrou, who turned it into a mediocre production in 1972.

27. In his "Retrato [Portrait] de Luis Buñuel," García Ascot describes her as the "extraordinary Jeanne," a being as strong and upright as Luis (25). Thanks to Javier Herrera and Raúl Miranda for tracking down this reference.

28. The Burgos Trial was held on December 3, 1970. Sixteen members of the Basque group ETA were tried for murder. Six were sentenced to death and the rest condemned to long prison sentences. The popular reaction

was such that the death sentences were commuted to imprisonment; however, in general, the Franco regime, in its declining years, returned to a level of repression not seen since the post-war period.

29. Rafael was born 1 July 1940, in New York. There is a lovely home movie clip, shot by Buñuel and discovered in 2011 by Jaiver Herrera in the mass of material that makes up the Buñuel Legacy at the Filmoteca Española in Madrid. It shows the family in their apartment on 83rd Street, in Central Park and during an outing with friends to a country home in Maine (probably Alexander Calder's). http://cultura.elpais.com/cultura/2011/12/04/videos/1322953201_870215.html.

30. He means León Sánchez Cuesta, who had a bookstore specializing in foreign books in Madrid and in 1927 set up the French branch, which would cater to a Spanish-speaking clientele. Vicens, who had worked briefly in the bookstore in Madrid, invested in the store in Paris. At first Gabriel Escribano (whom Jeanne mentions in her interview) was also involved. The bookstore became a center of diffusion for Spanish culture in Paris and, as Jeanne indicates, played an important role as a drop box for the Republicans during the Civil War. Although Sánchez Cuesta was a generation older than Buñuel and company, he had also passed through the Residencia and was close to many of the younger Residents.

31. As we know, Buñuel got to Paris in January of 1925.

32. Most of the group has already been described. Francisco Bores was another of the Spanish painters in Paris.

33. Henri Sauget and Milhaud were both composers. Milhaud, one of *Les Six,* was particularly known for his modernist experiments.

34. Apeles Fenosa, a Catalonian sculptor.

35. This is not the case, unless Aub is referring to the brouhaha over publication of the screenplay of the film. Buñuel gave the editors of *La Revue du cinéma* permission to publish the screenplay in the 15 November 1929 issue; however, Breton, Aragon and Éluard insisted that he save it for *La Révolution Surréaliste*, which would not come out for another month. Buñuel tried to rescind his first agreement, but it was too late; the issue had already gone to press, so he—and his cohorts—had to settle for a forceful letter of protest sent out to the main Paris newspapers. In fact, the surrealists were very concerned that Buñuel and Dalí might be lost to the influence of dissident surrealist Georges Bataille, author of *History of the Eye* and editor of *Documents* (Gubern and Hammond 10–11).

36. A Catalonian architect (Josep Lluis Sert), who was in Paris during the thirties.

37. Chim (born in Poland as Dawid Szymin, which was anglicized to David Seymour) and Robert Capa (an amalgam of two photographic and romantic partners: the German Gerda Taro and the Hungarian Endre Friedman) were the professional names of these three photographers who shot some of the best known images of the Spanish Civil War. It was often difficult to know whether a photograph was shot by Taro or Friedman. Taro was killed just at the beginning of the second year of the war. Friedman would continue for many years to work as a war photographer under the name Robert Capa.

38. All three belonged to the French Communist Party. Vallejo, of course, was the magnificent Peruvian poet.

39. The Exposition International des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne (Paris International Exhibition) was part of the 1937 World's Fair in Paris. Along with Joan Miró, Pablo Picasso, Alexander Calder, fellow architects Sert and Luis Lacasa designed the Spanish Pavilion, which became a showcase (as did the Tourist/Propaganda Office) for the Republican Cause. Its feature attraction was Picasso's *Guernica,* commissioned by the Spanish Republican government.

40. Surrealism in the service of the revolution was immediately preceded by *La Révolution Surréaliste* (The surrealist revolution), whose twelve issues came out in 1924–29.

41. Actually the date was March of 1932. The surrealists were all sympathetic to communism, but those who put Party discipline before the demands of surrealist expression formally left the group at that time. Those who opted to abandon the surrealist group were Aragon, Sadoul, Unik, Alexandre, Giacometti and Buñuel. Giacometti would return to the surrealist group a couple of months later. For a detailed discussion of a very complicated subject, see Gubern and Hammond 86–101.

42. Gubern and Hammond insist that this person was not LeGros (really, Maurice Tréand), as Buñuel says earlier, but Claude Servet (David Retchisky), a Russian-Swiss activist (97). They argue that Buñuel did not belong to the French Communist Party.

43. According to Buñuel, cited earlier, the group did not include Thirion. Giacometti would make six.

44. The Quintanilla network was an improvised operation that forced the operatives to learn on the job (Luengo Teixidor especially 44–46). Quintanilla headed it until May of 1937. At that point, due to a change in Republican leadership, Araquistaín left his position as ambassador, and Quintanilla gave up his post to devote himself to drawing what he saw on the fronts. In early 1939, the Republican government sent him to New York to paint an enormous mural (36' × 6.5') for the Spanish Pavilion at the World's Fair, but with the loss of the war, Spain withdrew from the fair, and the mural disappeared, only to be uncovered in 2007 during the restoration of the Bleecker Street Cinema, near Quintanilla's old New York studio. It has since been repatriated and are now on display at the University of Cantabria.

45. Gonzalo Queipo de Llano, a military leader, played a prominent role on the insurrectionist side in the Civil War.

46. The FBI kept watch over Buñuel when he was in Los Angeles, but what really drove him away was the failure to find sufficient work once Warner Brothers had closed its Spanish dubbing section in November of 1945 (Martín 660–680, 610 and 623–660).

47. An extremely popular Mexican actor and a successful director as well.

48. Actually, the film did not represent Mexico. Le Bret invited Buñuel to send it (Sánchez Vidal, *LB* 157).

49. The reason for this confusion is that there are two films, both based on Carlos Arniches's farce *Don Quintín, el amargao* (*Don Quintín, the Bitter*). The first was made by Filmófono in 1935, ostensibly directed by Luis Marquina, but overseen closely by Buñuel, under the title of Arniches's play. The second was made with Danciger in Mexico in 1951, directed (and signed) by Buñuel and titled *La hija del engaño* (*The Daughter of Deceit*).

50. There is some confusion here: *La Mort ce de jardin* was released in 1956; *La Fièvre monte à El Pao,* in 1959. Dancigers figures in the second film as an associate producer. The Belgian author is José-André Lacour.

51. Manuel Fraga Iribarne was at that point Minister of Information and Tourism. He was moderately liberal for the time and place. Under his leadership, censorship rules were somewhat relaxed, leading people to comment "Con Fraga hasta la braga" (with Fraga you can even show underpants). His long political career extended from the Franco years, through the transition and into democracy.

52. The script for *Ilegible, hijo de flauta* can be found in English in *An Unspeakable Betrayal* (Buñuel 181–207). "Gradiva," a story published in 1903 by the German writer Whilhelm Jensen was analyzed by Freud and made a big impression on the young Buñuel and Dalí. Buñuel wanted his omnibus film to include this story, as well as two written by prominent members of the "Boom": "Las menáedes" ["The Maenads"] by the Argentine Cortázar and *Aura* [*Aura*], a novella, by the Mexican Fuentes.

53. Jean Ferry, Buñuel's official co-writer (he had tried to lure Alcoriza to help him, but had trouble with union laws). Buñuel has described Ferry elsewhere as "the worst adapter I've ever had in my life."

54. Pope Pius XII did not speak out against Nazi racial policy during the war although he made some quiet efforts to mitigate such racism. Dalí became an apologist for Franco, probably out of self-interest. The French writer Claudel was known for his dedication to Catholicism and to other right-wing causes.

55. Larrea was actually Basque, born in Bilbao.

56. Ugarte was a co-writer on *Ensayo de un crimen* and Altolaguirre, on *Subida al cielo*, as well as its producer.

57. Buñuel recognized two of his films as based, quite loosely, on Galdós's novels. These two share a title with Galdós: *Nazarín* and *Tristana. Viridiana* has many similarities with *Halma,* the sequel to *Nazarín.* As we've seen, the co-scriptwriter Julio Alejandro also denies the similarity, but it has been noted by many critics. Buñuel entertained some idea of adapting Galdós's *Ángel Guerra* (*Angel Guerra*) as a film, but this did not come to pass (see 277*n*68).

58. Fernando G. Mantilla co-directed a number of films with Velo and also worked on his own as a film director and a film reviewer for Radio Unión. His membership in the Spanish Communist Party explains in part his championship of Soviet films. Velo's winning documentary was named *Galicia saudade* ("Nostalgia for Galicia").

59. In a detailed discussion of Buñuel's role in Filmófono, Gubern and Hammond essentially agree with Velo's term "Executive Producer" (200–239).

60. *King of Kings* (1961), by Nicholas Ray was a commercially successful film on a Biblical subject and typical of that genre.

61. Joaquín Costa, a nineteenth-century politician and historian was especially known for his efforts to reform what was then a backward country; Santiago Ramón y Cajal, sometimes called the Father of Neuroscience, was a Nobel Laureate. Along with Goya and Buñuel, they all were hard of hearing.

62. *Gallego* (Galician) is a form of Portuguese, not a dialect of Spanish.

63. He's thinking particularly of Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo's *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles* ("History of Spanish Heterodoxies").

64. This last section comes at the end of the transcription of the interview with Velo, but it is not included in the book (FMA: ADV.C.16–3/6).

65. A *verbena* is a little fair, held in a village or—in this case—a neighborhood. The airplane alluded to in the photo was a cut-out prop for photographs. This photograph of the two friends is often reproduced. For more on the poem, see 269*n*18.

66. The father was probably the extremely prolific sculptor of public monuments, Mariano Benlliure, or Mariano's brother, the painter José Benlliure y Gil, who was also well known.

67. Muñoz Suay is either reading from his notes or has lent them to Aub. Buñuel's films were still prohibited in Spain at this time, so people crossed the border to see them. What the actor actually says is, "My hatred of science and my horror of technology will finally lead me to this absurd belief in God…." There were roughly a million deaths in the Spanish Civil War.

68. *Ángel Guerra* is the name of the eponymous protagonist. His name literally means war angel or angel of war. Buñuel always wanted to make a film of this novel although he never did, but Rabal confirms that he had that novel in mind when he returned to Spain in 1960. Like most commentators (but not Buñuel and Julio Alejandro), Alatriste sees *Viridiana* as a version of Galdós's novel *Halma.* Whether Alatriste actually read *Halma* is another question. Rabal thinks the character Viridiana was inspired by Leré, the heroine of *Ángel Guerra* (Carnicero and Sánchez Salas 430–31). Silvia Pinal, who was Alatriste's girlfriend at the time and would become his wife, is the star of *Viridiana* and plays a role in *El ángel exterminador* and in *Simón del desierto.* She was known before and after that time as a comedian.

69. Figueroa was Buñuel's cinematographer in a number of films, chosen in part because he was quick and efficient, in part because his name had clout. Galindo, mentioned just below, was a prominent producer and actor.

70. A very long story indeed. In additional to banning the film and any reference to it in Spain, the Spanish government tried to prevent it from being shown in any other country (release in Italy, France and Mexico was delayed). Muñoz Fontán lost his job, and the fall-out destroyed UNINCI.

71. This poem was published in *Songs* (*Canciones,* 1927) and was part of a series called "Games" ("Juegos"), all dedicated to Buñuel.

72. In the 1985 edition, this last sentence reads "peligro" (danger) instead of "milagro" (miracle), but only "miracle" makes sense in the context. Another such unnoticed miracle occurs in *La Voie Lactée.*

73. Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., the twenty-eighth Superior General of the Jesuits and an exponent of liberation theology.

74. Orson Welles, who worked as producer, director and writer, never finished his version of *Don Quixote*. He shot it off and on between 1957 and his death in 1985. Hugo Butler was a Canadian born screenwriter, working in Hollywood until he was blacklisted. He moved to Mexico and continued to write under pseu*don*yms or using other writers as fronts. He co-scripted *The Young One*

with Buñuel under the name H. P. Addis and also worked with Carlos Velo.

75. Kyrou is apparently unaware of Buñuel's adherence to the Communist Party.

76. Antoni Gaudí, the well known turn-of-the-century Catalonian architect and Santiago Rusiñol, the Catalonian painter who was active at the same time. Both exemplified the Catalonian modernism of the period.

77. Dalí is playing with the term *lamido,* which comes from the verb *lamer,* to lick. *Lamido/a* refers to art that is very polished, even overly polished (I've used the word *slick*). Earlier, in this same conversation, he refers to his painting as *lamida y relamida,* meaning polished (or slick) and polished again—i.e., affected. Here he's referring to the basic meaning of the word. When he turns *trompe l'oeil* (trick of the eye) into Spanish, he's still playing. A *trompa* is a snout; a *trampa* is a trick.

78. Blaise Pascal, the seventeenth-century French mathematician and thinker, wrestled with the problems of stoicism and skepticism in relation to one's faith in God.

79. Desperate to do something with *L'Âge d'or,* which had been first accepted and then refused by the French censors and had caused its Maecenas much embarrassment, in 1932 Buñuel decided to cut it down to a twenty-minute short with a different title. The most "offensive" scenes would be excised, and—as the new title *Dans les eaux glacées du calcul égoïste* ("In the Icy Water of Selfish Calculation"), which was lifted from the *Communist Manifesto*—suggests, this would be a version designed for consumption by the proletariat and approved by the French Communist Party. It was also a response to a cutting letter from Dalí which Buñuel had received in March of that year. This version, too, was rejected by the censors (Gubern and Hammond 104, 137–140). As to Dalí's insistence that he always liked the film very much, this is true … up to a point. He wrote a defense of the film for the original program (Buñuel was in Hollywood at the time), but years later, as we have seen, in *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* (1942), he attacked the film as anti-clerical and atheist and even suggested Buñuel's communism, thus—very intentionally—contributing to Buñuel's loss of his job with the Rockefeller group (see 269–70*n*102).

80. The greatest part of this interview is taken from two transcripts at the FMA, ADV.C 14–7/3 and ADV. C 14–7/4. The first is dated as above; the second contains a reference to the 25th, but it's not clear whether this is the same month or even a date. The second transcript is, at points, hard to follow. The last sections, in which Amérigo talks about the effect of vertigo on the director and Aub describes Buñuel's fury on hearing that two parts had been cut out of one of the copies of *Nazarín* are from the 1985 book and do not appear in either of the transcripts at the FMA.

81. The Farm School was a kind of benevolent reformatory.

82. Actually, Roberto Cobo was a dancer in a nightclub, not an actor, but Alfonso Mejía (the lead), Estela Inda (his mother), Miguel Inclán (the blind man) and Alma Delia Fuentes (the girl) all had experience in film.

83. *Una mujer sin amor,* based on Guy de Maupassant's *Pierre et Jean,* adapted by Jaime Salvador and released in 1952, usually considered the director's weakest film. Aub uses the Spanish for Maupassant's title.

84. Alcoriza speaks of this Galán as a known entity, so it may have been Alberto, who had a successful career but had gone through a long dry patch before this film.

85. Pierre Louÿs's novel (*The Woman and the Puppet,* 1898) was the source for this unrealized project. The producer insisted that Brigitte Bardot play the woman, and Buñuel rebelled. It did come out in 1959 with Bardot, directed by Jean Duvivier. In 1977, Buñuel made *Cet Obscur Objet du désir* (*That Obscure Object of Desire*), based on the same novel, using, famously, two different actresses to incarnate the woman, but without Alcoriza's participation.

86. Marco Ferreri, an Italian director, screenwriter and actor, began his career in Spain. Franz Kafka died in 1924 two years before *The Castle* was published. Like his short stories and his other novel, *The Trial,* it had a tremendous impact on twentieth-century literature, and his early death was much lamented and widely known.

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Films Directed by Buñuel

The title is given in the original language, then in English, followed by the release date.

Abismos de pasión/Cumbres borrascosas (*Wuthering Heights*), 1954.
L'Âge d'or (*The Golden Age*), 1930.
El ángel exterminador (*The Exterminating Angel*), 1962.
El bruto (*El Bruto*), 1953.
Belle de Jour (*Belle de Jour*), 1967.
Cela s'appelle l'aurore (*That Is the Dawn*), 1956.
Cet obscure objet du désir (*That Obscure Object of Desire*), 1977.
Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie (*The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*), 1972.
Un Chien andalou (*Un Chien Andalou/An Andalusian Dog*), 1929.
Él (*El/This Strange Passion*), 1953.
Ensayo de un crimen (*The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz*), 1955.
Le Fantôme de la liberté (*The Phantom of Liberty*), 1974.
La Fièvre monte à El Pao (*Fever Mounts at El Pao*), 1959.
El gran calavera (*The Great Madcap*), 1949.
Gran Casino/En el viejo Tampico (*Gran Casino*), 1947.
La hija del engaño (*Daughter of Deceit*), 1951.
La ilusión viaja en tranvía (*Illusion Travels by Streetcar*), 1954.
Le Journal d'une femme de chambre (*Diary of a Chambermaid*), 1964.
La Mort en ce jardin (*Death in the Garden*), 1956.
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